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A New Novel

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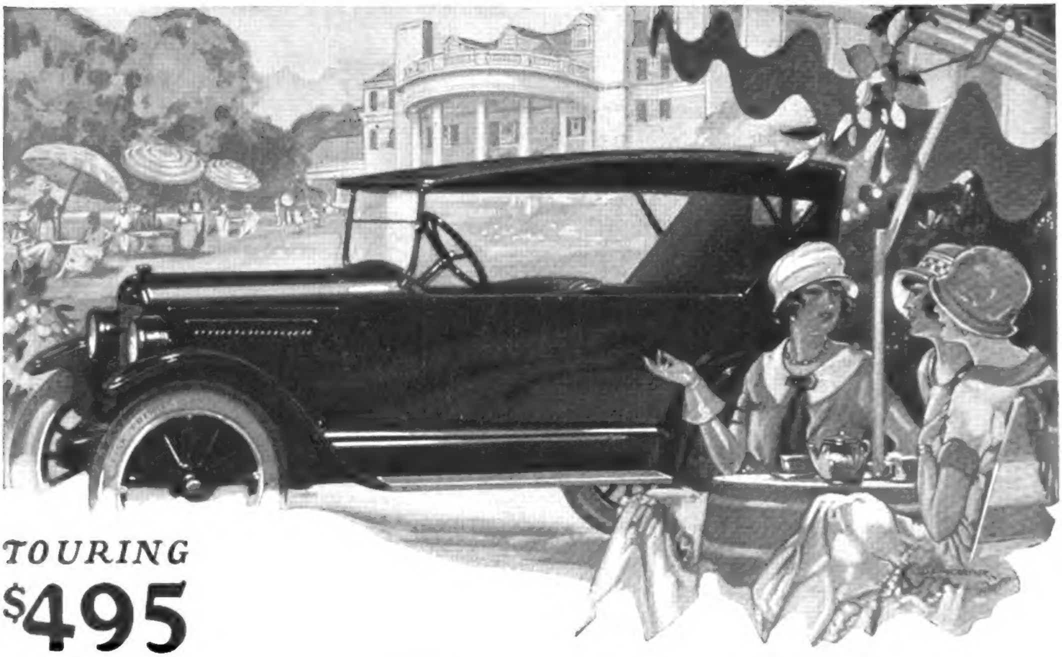

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Overland

Everybody's

NUMBER THREE SEPTEMBER, 1924 VOLUME FIFTY-ONE

If It's in Everybody's It's a Good Story

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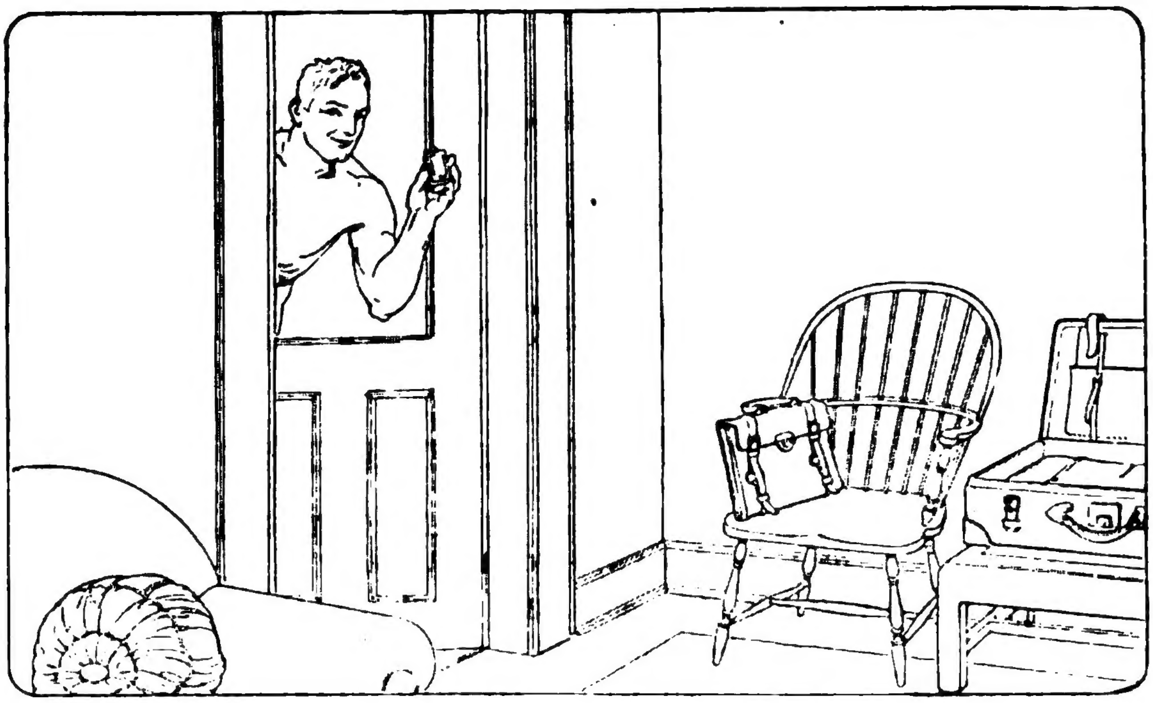
To Knights of the double-rail



In Days of Old, when knights were bold, men left their cosy castle firesides to do battle for the glory of ladies fair, with golden hair.

Men leave home today for approximately similar reasons, but instead of lances and shields, they carry briefcases, conference material and order-books.

Which brings us at once to our favorite subject of soap.

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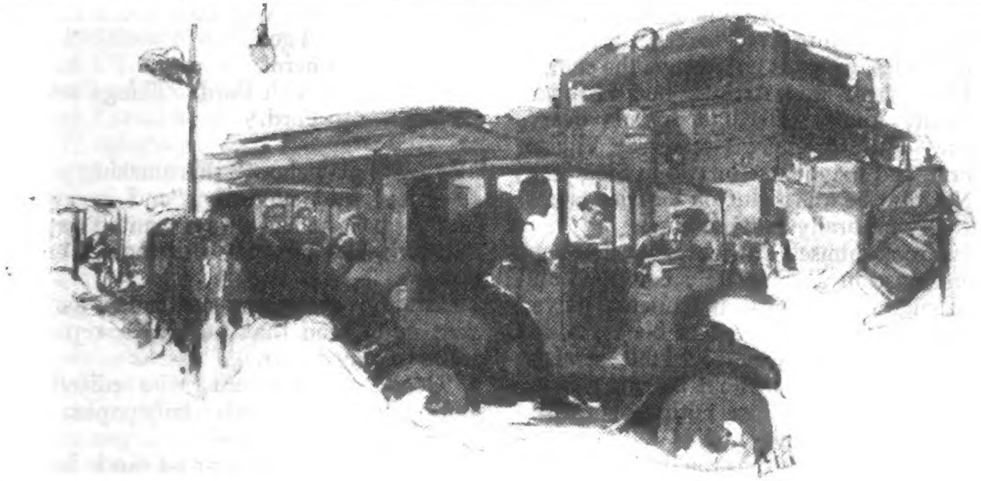
VOL. 51, NO. 3 SEPTEMBER, 1924 SEWELL HAGGARD, EDITOR



It Can't Be Done

Cholmondely Had Been Picked on, and Was Wound Up for Revenge. It Took Just Those Four Little Words from a Friend to Start Him

By Mabel Dunham Thayer

Illustrations by Lawrence Herndon

PENNY worked on a newspaper and Bess was just as irresponsible. They did not have a moral between them. They were so unmoral they did not know what temptation looked like.

Temptation is like electricity. It has to have a complete circuit and some people do not seem to be wired for it.

Penny and Bess never seemed to be until—but that is the story.

Penny, short for Penelope, was blonde, very blonde, with big, wide-set blue eyes heavily fringed with black. Every one was always protecting her, though from what, goodness knows! People helped her over curbstones and did all her hard assignments and were careful not to let her hear things she knew already anyway. I see you are smiling, so there's no need for me to explain further.

Even Bess looked after her sometimes, which made Penny furious, for Bess was even smaller than Penny and much more delightfully illogical and feminine. Penny's word for it!

Bess was secretary to a broker. He was not a regular broker. He was one of the kind you are sure to meet if your aunt has died and left you a little loose change needing investment. But that was not Bess's fault—the broker, I mean, not your aunt's death; although that was not her fault either.

Bess's fun was all on the inside, which made it more interesting than if she had carried it on her coat sleeve as some folks do their hearts. It kept one guessing.

Bess and Penny lived together and were pals besides, which is not always the case.

Then there was Arthur, but him you probably know. He had friends everywhere—Fifth Avenue, Greenwich Village, Peoria, and maybe one or two in Sing Sing.

Not that he was a glutton for friendships, but they naturally came to him.

He took himself rather seriously, kept open house in a completely equipped and immaculate bachelor's apartment; played the violin well, read excellent books, talked little, smiled seldom and could fill a straight flush in the middle without batting an eyelid of surprise. In fact nothing surprised him, not even Penny.

It was at Arthur's that the thing began.

People went there on the flimsiest pretexts. Penny went because she liked to and Bessie went because she liked Arthur, which was more than a reason.

Perhaps the rest went because, of all places in New York, Arthur's promised the most diversified interest. Take, for instance, Ford, who lived happiness as hard as some men live religion or politics or bolshevism. Ford had the experimental itch. He enjoyed shoving people out of their pet ruts, with the weird notion that they would be happier floundering around in the open.

He was not the rutty sort himself.

But Cholmondely was!

Guy Algernon Cholmondely, late of London and the British army, was Ford's latest discovery, therefore Arthur's newest guest.

Now you know the worst. And if you do, you also know there is nothing so rutty as a rutty Britisher late of London and the British army.

In the first place Cholmondely did not like Bohemian apartments. And in the second, he did not think girls should go to men's rooms even in Bohemia.

He did not like it. He did not even like girls—much.

And he was not keen about pranks. He did not like to be silly.

And every one was silly at Arthur's if he wished to be. And Cholmondely did not approve of Love in capital letters and he heard a lot about Love at Arthur's.

There was not much that he did like except Kipling and business and hunting and golf. He was very keen about Kipling and hunting and golf.

A deuce of a hero!

It all began with Ford. Things usually did begin with Ford.

"LET'S play show," this amazing person had said suddenly, "and every one take the part he has always wanted to play. The plot, like life, will develop as we go along."

Instantly every one responded as if it were quite true that he had a repressed desire to play a part.

"Good!" cried Grant, who edited the sport column of a popular daily paper. "I'll be Penny's editor and—"

"I shall be her g-r-r-r-rand lover," sighed Doret rapturously.

Cholmondely raised an eyebrow slightly. Doret wrote cynical books on feminism.

"Back away, Doret," argued Grant. "You're a fine old hypocrite!"

"But Penny is ze princess and I am ze loyal subject, *n'est-ce pas?*"

"And I shall be a cat," said Viola, blowing rings of smoke and catching them on her finger, "and tell you what I really think of you!"

"And I'm the audience," said Penny complacently. She was a lazy little soul at times.

"You're nothing of the sort," said Jimmy Ford.

"I should shay!" agreed Viola. "I can't be half as catty as I like if you're not one of us, you heart-breaker!"

"All right!" Penny pouted. "But I'll tell you right now I never wanted to be any one but me."

"Satisfied creature!" hissed Virginia, and then with the suggestion of a sigh: "Would that I were—" Virginia was a prima donna whose name blazed in three-feet-high letters of fire whenever she deigned to sing.

Cholmondely had maneuvered to seat himself in the far corner of the room and had hidden himself, so to speak, behind the pages of "Don Juan."

"Penny shall be Goldilocks—" said the Angel Child.

"And I'll be all three bears," supplemented Ford.

"You can't! I'm going to be the weeny bear my own self," asserted the Angel Child stoutly, with the pout that had taken her out of the chorus of the Winter Garden and into a kid show of her own.

"And I'll be the wicked witch of a stepmother," cried Virginia.

"And I shall be the middle-size bear, ees it not?" delightedly volunteered Doret.

"And I shall be zee lovair!" offered Cantini, the violinist.

Arthur took bottles of precious liquids from the ice-box and began soon-to-be-forgotten rites with a shaker and cracked ice.

"Now," said Ford, with one ear pleasantly cocked to the sound of swishing liquids, "now we're all set!"

He looked over his company with pardonable pride. It was cosmopolitan enough to intrigue any one. He glanced at Cholmondely to see if he were properly impressed. He was.

He was wondering impatiently where they all came from and how soon he could decently get away before some one asked him to dance jazz or sing a song.

He did not analyze it, but he felt instinctively that Americans were constitutionally drunk, mixing friendships as they mixed their drinks and with somewhat the same results.

Ford grinned to himself as Cholmondely hid his disgust behind his book.

"Now, Penny," he said, "you're in the bear's house looking for strawberries."

"Why should I be in the house looking for fruit?"

"Don't be so literal. You have the berries and have come in to rest. You sit down in the chair all tired out—"

"And the cat crawls out from underneath the stove and climbs in your lap!" interposed Viola, crawling out from under the reading table and suiting the action to the word.

"Help!" cried Penny.

"Pssssst! Grrrrrrr! Bow-wow!" snarled Viola.

"Say, what's your part?" asked Grant politely. "Are you a dog or a cat?"

"Never mind what she is. Back she goes under the stove. Give her a saucer of milk!" Penny was firm.

"Make it a smoke and I'll go you!"

Cholmondely's eyebrow rose again, the barest trifle. Ford chuckled. Just wait, he thought. He had upset worse monuments of dignity.

"The cat disposed of, the hero enters. I am the hero." Ford strutted about with a lordly air.

"But I am ze lovair."

"Lovers aren't heroes. They only sigh and suffer."

"But I shall be both."

"Do both, you mean," corrected Ford. "Never mind; I shall be the fairy godmother. It matters not."

"You're a dainty sprite," Viola poked her head out from under the table to inform him.

"For once we agree, beautiful one. A wicked sprite who kicks the cat." Which same he proceeded to do.

"SOMEBODY has eaten out of my plate and eaten it all up," squealed the Angel Child, trying to hasten the action.

"Not yet! Not yet! Penny, you awake with a start!"

"I haven't been asleep."

Ford ignored it. "You've lost the strawberries, without which you cannot return home."

Grant and the Angel Child began a foxtrot.

Doret tore his hair. "You make of this company a vaudeville, ees it not?"

Ford looked around helplessly.

"You're spoiling my classic," he accused. "Here is the strawberry box. A nice full box of candy and if you're very good you can have it to eat afterwards. Now I enter and say: 'Just a kiss, my lady Goldilocks—' "

The foxtrot stopped abruptly, partly because Cantini had rushed between them in his own defense.

"But you are not ze lovair!" cried Doret excitedly.

"Certainly not," agreed Ford. "I'm the fairy godmother! Now, just a tiny kiss. So small a thing and yet more to be desired than gleaming jewels."

Penny sighed a long, delicious sigh.

"And I just love candy!"

"And I just love kisses," he mocked.

"But I don't," she answered, making a mouth.

"Oh, pshaw! You've never had one!"

This stopped any diverting noise. Even the shaker remained suspended in Arthur's firm hands. It was so unexpected and its effect upon Penny so amazing.

Penny opened her eyes in surprise, started to refute, then caught her breath in bewilderment. She never had.

But it was not the fact that she had not that so astonished her. She had never thought about it before—not seriously.

And then the color rushed furiously to her cheek to betray her.

No one had ever asked her. She could not remember even one!

Perhaps it was her fault. The imperious toss of her dainty head that threatened scorn! Or the mischievous dimple which made ridicule oh, so easy! Or her fragile, so to be protected little self!

And she was always such a square little pal, standing so firmly on her own feet! Ready any minute to laugh, or work, or romp!

But never to have been kissed!

She looked around the room at the laughing faces reading her changing expressions with such unfeigned delight.

Bess! Penny glanced musingly at Arthur, her worst fears confirmed by his elaborate nonchalance. Virginia, bewitchingly inviting, the maddening twinkles of mirth proving at least one pleasant reminiscence. Even stately Viola, she too had tasted of the sugared fruit.

There was no denying it. They had all—

Ford sat down in a chair limply.

"She never has," he said weakly. "Somebody's crazy!"

"But I'm not ugly," protested Penny miserably.

"Not!" agreed Ford emphatically, remembering guiltily how often he had thought about how very pretty she was.

"And I'm—I'm—"

"Perhaps you never wanted to," he suggested wickedly. "They do say as how the women plan it first and we men just—"

"Maybe," she agreed unconvincingly, wondering with a dull hurt whether no one had ever wanted her, "I've never thought of it."

Ford jumped to his feet to relieve the tenseness.

"But now that you have, here's the candy and—" He grinned ingratiatingly.

But Penny had turned and caught the expression of mild tolerance on Cholmondely's face. An Englishman to smile at her shame!

IF SHE had known it, he was not smiling. He felt keenly sorry for her and he thought Ford a bounder, but it was not any of his business; so he bent over his book in an irritatingly superior way.

Now Penny was more embarrassed than she knew. She felt all queer and confused, and she hated to feel queer. And every one was laughing at her and she hated to be laughed at; so when he seemed to add the finishing touch by his maddening indifference, the imps were ready for her undoing.

"I don't believe he's ever been kissed either!" she said stoutly, looking at the offending one.

"Bravo!" shouted Ford. "Two of them!" In his heart there sang an unholy glee.

"And I've thought of it now," she threatened sulkily, with a ghost of a mischievous smile in her stormy blue eyes.

"And I'm a world-beater," boasted Ford.

But she evaded him, laughing now, and ran over to Cholmondely, who was quite unprepared for this sudden shift of attention.

Tantalizingly, she smiled down at him. She did not care what she was doing so long as she could torment some one, a truly human weakness when the shaft of ridicule strikes home.

"Oh, come on, that isn't fair!" wailed Ford, but with that delightful thrill of apprehension which preceded an unexpected explosion.

Penny only made more merry and bent over the man, who still kept his eyes on the offending book.

Every one laughed at Ford's apparent discomfiture. And they chuckled in fearsome delight at Cholmondely's probable wrath.

It pleased them to have his British dignity upset.

"Here, ladies and gentlemen," Penny cried, "are the two great wonders of the world. Both unversed in the joys of living!"

"Hooray!" shouted Grant.

"Sh!" It came from several lips, unconsciously.

"Chivalry, in these days of feminine supremacy, forces me to my duty." And oh, the teasing mockery in her voice!

"Knowing he would not dare—I must go to him! Gentlemen, ladies, Prince Charming! I salute you!"

The color mounted to her cheeks, her eyes flashed as she swept a low curtsy. Then, putting her arms around his neck, she uptilted his chin with one small hand, and with eyes shut tight in true feminine fashion, she kissed him.

But a kiss, though small, is a queer sort of thing.

From the moment their lips met, her heart seemed to stop beating. She tore herself away, breathless.

Everything seemed hushed. Her cheeks burned scarlet. Forcing her will to carry out the jest, she looked up to face the stillness. But every eye in the room was focused on Cholmondely. He was tense with rage at the ridiculous position in which he found himself.

"Rotten bad taste!" he kept saying to himself. "Rotten bad form!"

Penny quailed before the scorn in his eyes, but she could not move. The smile stiffened on her lips. She could only stand and wait, a poor crumpled bit of a girl.

Then he smiled, a ghastly smile over tight-shut teeth, as if he were having a hard time with his carefully trained emotions.

"Children who play with fire may jolly well be burned," he drawled. "You have kissed me to amuse your friends. You dared me. Now I am going to kiss you to amuse myself, every Thursday, Princess Goldilocks!" He stood up, shrugged his shoulders, and bent over her hand in derisive imitation of her own curtsy.

Then he strode quickly across the room, picked up his hat, and turned abruptly in the doorway. Tall, slim and straight, and very young he stood, his clean-cut features absolutely expressionless save for the slight crinkles in the corners of his ironic brown eyes. It was a smile, but such a smile!

"Gentlemen, ladies, Princess Goldilocks, I salute you." He clicked his heels together, bowing. "You will find Prince Charming neither a laggard nor a coward."

The door closed behind him.

Arthur came forward with a tray of drinks.

Ford took one gratefully. "Lor'!" he ejaculated, mopping his forehead. "Who let him in?"

Penny tried to laugh but it stuck in her throat.

"What a rotter!" snapped the Angel Child. "I'm going home."

"Besides," said Virginia pleasantly, "he can't do it."

"Big blow!" growled Grant. "Every Thursday! He can't break through stone and steel."

"Every Thursday I shall spend wiz my Penny," said Doret triumphantly.

"Great idea! We'll all—" Always ready to take everything as a joke, this company, chattering like magpies, laughing! Two big tears stood unnoticed in Penny's big eyes—tears of rage and humiliation. He had not had to get mad!

"Penny, you're not taking it seriously?" Bess put her arm around Penny's shoulder. "Buck up, there's a dear. He's too good a sport."

Ford started slightly. "That's what I'm afraid of. He is a sport!" he mused aloud.

They all began talking at once now.

"Anyway, he couldn't . . . Rotter! Don't you believe . . . All the English . . . And he can't . . . He didn't mean . . . You could stay home . . . Blazes!"

They tried to go on with the party but the spell was broken. One by one they made excuses and drifted away.

FORD kicked himself roundly every time he thought of Penny's humiliation. He had tried to see Cholmondely for days and when he did, he told him straight out that he was a rotten sport.

And that hurt.

Cholmondely bit savagely into his cigar and stared moodily out of the window of his apartment.

"It was damned bad taste," he defended truculently.

"Kissing you?" Ford queried with a mild smile. "Well—admitting that—"

"You know jolly well what I mean!"

"I'm glad you see it that way, Chummy. One doesn't get mad in America when a pretty girl—"

"Oh, rot!"

"You'll have to be more explicit," Ford said patiently. "Lord knows, I'd like to get your viewpoint." He eyed the tip of his cigarette speculatively. "It's unique."

"Impudent young hoyden!" muttered Cholmondely. "You know she made a silly ass of me."

Ford stifled the obvious rejoinder, but not quickly enough for Cholmondely to miss the twinkle in his eye.

"Now I think," said Ford quietly, "you owe the young lady an apology."

"An apology?" spluttered Cholmondely.

"Tell her you're sorry and all that." Ford contemplated his cigarette ash again with suspicious earnestness.

Slow crinkles formed at the corners of Cholmondely's brown eyes.

"Sorry that she kissed me?" he asked innocently.

Ford started slightly. He had not expected it.

"Or sorry I promised to k—" The Englishman was pursuing his advantage.

"You threatened!" Ford thundered. The man was showing symptoms of becoming irrepressible, and it reminded him of what the British did in France. Also he remembered uneasily that it did not take them very long to get in.

"A good sport does not threaten!" he reprimanded, knowing he was hitting on a touchy spot.

"But a good sport jolly well keeps his promises," answered Cholmondely impudently, pleased with his advantage in spite of his sulks.

Ford sprang to his feet excitedly.

"But, man, you can't! It isn't—it—"

"Cricket?" supplied Cholmondely helpfully.

"Hang it, no! It isn't cricket!"

Up to this point Cholmondely had been a disgruntled youngster nursing his dignity.

"I say you can't do a thing like that," Ford expostulated.

PERHAPS even then his training would have kept Cholmondely from further escapade had he not caught a sudden glimpse of himself in the mirror. He had to admit that he looked like a man who could not.

So he said blandly: "Why not?"

He looked again at his too correct self: his blond hair too smoothly faultless; his features too cleanly chiseled from pinkishly clear marble. Unbidden to his vision came Penny's tangled curls and wilful dimples, so—so alive. And the little hurt boy within him who had never been allowed utterance winced at the contrast. He wanted suddenly to be vitally alive. Of course he stifled the thought at once and carefully strove to keep any emotion from betraying itself in his voice when he spoke.

Ford had hastily been reviewing many reasons audibly and forcefully.

"But you see," Cholmondely interrupted him, "I am going to do just that!"

It was not Ford's fault that, having done his duty by Penny, he quickened with interest. Cholmondely settled back again in his chair as stolidly British as the old boy himself.

"I don't see how you could," Ford prodded guiltily. "New York's pretty big—"

Cholmondely turned and eyed him thoughtfully. He did not like the American habit of intruding on one's private affairs. Presently he rang the bell for his man and stood up in unmistakable dismissal.

Ford blinked. "But I wasn't going," he stammered.

Cholmondely's smile was baffling, but his rudeness was convincing.

"You see, old dear," he said, handing him his hat and stick, "it's Thursday. You had forgotten that I have an engagement."

"Oh, but man, it can't be done! But if it can," he added hurriedly, "why can't I—"

Cholmondely opened the door politely but definitely.

"I said *my* amusement, you know," he said quietly.

"Well, I'll be da—" spluttered Ford weakly.

"You probably will be," Cholmondely agreed cheerfully, and closed the door behind him.

His enthusiasm, however, vanished with Ford. He did not want to mix up in Bohemia. He did not want to kiss any girl. He did not want to kiss Penny. But an unaccountable quickness of breath exasperated him as he thought of that particular young person.

"It's quite too simple," he said with a frown. "Some public place like Broadway, what?" He shuddered slightly. He hated Broadway. He picked up a book. "And I'll bet a thousand sterling, highly chaperoned," he said for no reason at all.

He lit another cigar to prove his indifference.

"And I'll give four quid to the Irish republic if any one from Arthur's is there to spoof her if I kiss—"

"You called, sir?" Barker stood in the

doorway eyeing him with a look of singular distrust.

Cholmondely started guiltily.

"I'm going out, Barker. My hat," said Cholmondely suddenly.

"Yes, sir; quite right, sir!"

He closed the door thoughtfully behind his master.

"Four quid to the Irish if he ki-ki-sses her!" Barker repeated thickly. "It's the States that's ruinin' 'im. 'Ell, I calls 'em. Four quid—"

A CABARET singer jazzing a song of sorts on a raised platform! A shower of confetti and streamers floating from every corner of the balcony which ran around three sides of the room! Balls of colored celluloid tossed back and forth from table to table. A medley of gaiety, laughing confusion! The orchestra trying to drown out the brass-lunged entertainer! Noise! Buzz! Clamor! Lights! New Yorkers who loved the dreams of the old caravan! New Yorkers who dared not stop to think: who could not think if they would. A few timid New Yorkers showing folks around. And out-of-towners, scores of them!

And Penny, becoming uneasy even with the protection of her white-haired Aunt Jane and Uncle Pete! Not to mention her second cousin Willard, who was a most estimable person!

Anything might happen in a place like this! Nothing would, of course! You know what blows the British are! But if it did, it could, was Penny's somewhat ambiguous idea.

"Let's go home," she suggested nervously.

"Oh, not yet!" protested Aunt Jane, who seldom got a night on Broadway and liked to make the most of it. Not that nights on Broadway were anything to boast about since the war, but they were different from Jersey, at least.

"Well—well—then let's go over to the Beauchanson," she insisted.

Cousin Willard frowned slightly. He was a stolid young man who did not like to be toted around.

It was at this moment that Cholmondely descended the steps into the crowded gaiety of the restaurant.

"I might be your once-in-a-while!" howled the baritone.

A pretty girl with too large diamonds threw confetti into Cholmondely's face as he stepped into the room. He scarcely noticed. Down the aisle to a center table he went, buying it with the only moral suasion New York had taught him.

He was bored with the scene. Shaded lights, playing fountains, mirrored walls and the gorgeous blonde creature who turned and twisted with a sinuous male partner in semi-artistic gymnastics and jiu jitsu wrestlings. He had seen prettier sights in London, more shocking in Paris, more interesting in Rome!

He was bored, or rather he was trying to be bored.

"I've talked too much," he told himself savagely. "I don't want to kiss any one. Stupid idea. Awfully bad form, kissing strange women!"

Suddenly he caught a glimpse of her in one of the many mirrors. He turned to try to locate her, but she was lost in the maze of faces.

Now she was passing down the aisle—but which aisle? Behind her came a stodgy young man, arguing. She was almost to the door. Passing through!

Why he did it, he never knew! Jumping up, he strode past waiters and newcomers with impartial zeal. He reached the sidewalk barely in time to see a taxi turning south on Broadway.

Now where?

He tried several restaurants before he thought of the Beauchanson. It did not occur to him now to quit. And it was not wholly the fear of further ridicule. It was the everlasting sporting spirit that had made him snap at any dare, the eternal bulldog holding him hard and fast to any purpose—and may be just a little bit (only this he would have denied) the thrill of youth at adventure and the tingle of lips on his.

Once more he entered among the merrymakers, managing to retain his hat and stick to be ready for emergency.

Unfortunately he seemed to have entered into a circle of friends.

There was Chase the cover artist, with Compton-Smith the writer. And in the corner sat Ford. He headed quickly for an obscure table, sat with his back to his acquaintances and buried his face in his hands, grateful that he was unknown to those wells of worldly wisdom, the waiters.

In a distant corner was Penny, inconveniently chaperoned and with a young man monopolizing her in the most fatuous way.

Willard was discussing socialism, but Guy could not know that; and his sense of propriety was shocked. How could she talk so earnestly to another when the only man who had ever kissed her was only a few feet away? It was not decent. Besides, it was Thursday. She ought to look worried. His pride suffered a distinct setback.

Then she saw him and bowed coldly; but as she turned he caught a fleeting, mocking smile of triumph.

Now he had been supplied with a righteous excuse for doing what he had intended doing anyway. Unconcernedly he drew out a cigar. The waiter set an alleged ginger-ale on the table before him.

Penny leaned forward quickly and said something to her escort.

Almost before he realized it they had risen, had put on their wraps, were leaving.

When did they pay their check? How had they evaded those pirates at the door?

Imperatively he called his waiter and tossed a much too large bill into his hand. There was no time for detail.

EVEN in his haste, his quick glance around showed Ford much engaged by a comely brunette; Compton-Smith and Chase evidently had already gone. No one had recognized him.

He reached then for his hat.

It was gone!

At some unwatched moment the hat-boy—

But he had no time! She was at the door! And it was late! She might go home!

Cholmondely dashed madly for the door. The waiter dashed after Cholmondely.

A young cub in evening clothes blocked his path, boisterously inclined from too great indulgence in the cup that cheers. He pushed him unceremoniously aside. Newcomers filled the aisle ahead. The close-set tables jumped into his path as he frantically elbowed his way through the crowd. The young cub made a grab for him and succeeded in pushing him headfirst into a group of arriving guests. He tried to regain his balance and became the center of a tornado of flying fists. All eyes were turned upon him as he tore himself free with a headlong rush, head down, in football fashion. The air was filled with high-pitched voices. The waiters in their mad scramble to quell the disturbance added more disorder. Suddenly the whole restaurant became a seething mass of motion, as laughter changed to dread excitement. The music stopped playing. Every one was on his feet.

And then without warning the lights went out.

The same thought came to everybody at once. It was a prearranged plan to rob. He was a Raffles!

Cries of "Police!" "Robber!" were lost in the general chaos of screams. Tables overturned. Glasses fell, adding their crash to the general riot.

Wildly he climbed, yes, climbed through the entrance, eluding detaining hands. Guests near the entrance grabbed each other with shrill cries of "I've got him!" Pandemonium broke loose! In a panic, people fought each other, barring the way to the street. But Cholmondely had already passed through. Disheveled and panting, he reached the sidewalk. The doorman tried to stop him, but he was in it now to the finish. One swift jab with his left, and the doorman ceased to be interested.

A taxi was just leaving.

Were they in it? He tried to jump for it, but was too late. There were no others at the stand. He glanced hastily over his shoulder. It was only a question of seconds when the excitement from within would reach the street.

A taxi was rounding the corner, proceeding toward Fifth Avenue. With a wild leap he landed on the running-board, crying quickly to the chauffeur: "Go on! Go on!"

Already the crowd was pouring from the restaurant like ants from a trodden hill.

At Fifth Avenue the taxi ahead turned south and with a wild command to follow it, Cholmondely reached forward and thrust a yellow-back into the chauffeur's hand. They were going now at breakneck speed, and the car careened madly as they turned the corner.

So intent was Cholmondely upon the chase and upon retaining his lead against overwhelming odds, he did not realize that worse was to come. Up to this time he had been grasping the outside of the door, balancing on the step. Now he turned and looked within the car.

Hanging onto the inside of the door handle was a girl, staring at him through the open window with wide, frightened eyes. He didn't know what to say. His position was perilous, rocking and swaying there on the narrow running-board. He tried to think of some likely story to get himself inside the car and gain the driver's allegiance—and the girl's. There must be a way.

Just then he heard a shout, a roar of sound behind him. It was growing louder. He stiffened, almost relaxing his hold upon the car. A cold chill crept swiftly up his back.

Some one screaming "Stop!" with unnecessary loudness he thought. He hoped the girl wouldn't hear. He must get into the machine. They could see him too plainly on the outside, there.

"If you'll let me in," he gasped through shut teeth, "I'll explain. If—if—I stay out here, I'll be killed. You—you wouldn't want to murder a man, would—you?"

The girl was bewildered by his argument.

"But—but—you might be—" she stammered, not relaxing her hold upon the door handle.

"But I'm not," he hastened to assure her, before she had time to accuse him. "I'm—I'm after a lady."

"You're after—a lady!"

The horror in her voice showed that he was not helping the cause.

"My—my wife," he added desperately. "My—bride!"

That was an inspiration. Irene Dorr was the girl's name. Boarding-school was her habitat. No wonder she was thinking it was just too dear and romantic for anything! And the ring on his finger that she could plainly see, showed a coat of arms or some such interesting engraving. She wasn't a bit afraid now—she had read books, had Irene, and knew the world a bit.

CHOLMONDELY looked back. The taxi following was drawing nearer, and behind it was another—and another. His throat became dry! They were after him in earnest.

"Go on, go on!" he cried frantically to the chauffeur, who seemed to be slowing up.

"But—"

The girl leaned forward. "Go on!" she commanded, and let go the door handle, nearly sending Cholmondely into the street. He caught himself and fell into the taxi, almost into the girl's arms.

"They've stolen my bride!" he repeated, dramatically. "Gotta catch her!"

The cries behind them became louder.

"Stop thief! Help! Police!"

"I say, you know—they're friends—what?" He tried to speak nonchalantly. "They're—they're trying to get the whole city after me so that I won't be able to find her!"

"Well, they won't!" responded the sweet young thing beside him, vehemently.

He looked behind, through the inadequate window provided for that purpose—adequate enough, however, to show him the procession streaming out and adding strength at every corner.

If only some day some man would pursue *her* so recklessly! Irene leaned forward and gave sharp commands to the chauffeur, explaining his plight in quick, eager words. Her heart was beating wildly with the thrilling excitement. Wedding parties are all crazy, the chauffeur well knew, and he shot the machine forward with all speed.

Cholmondely sat on the edge of the seat.

The cries grew louder, more insistent.

His forehead was clammy!

"Shake loose! Shake loose!" he cried at last, struggling to remember enough American slang to make himself understood. "Where are you heading?"

"Jersey!" This from over the shoulder as he turned into Twenty-third Street.

"Forget it! Double, and drop the mob! Do you think I want her name in all the papers?" shouted the supposed bridegroom. "Can't get you in trouble," he explained to Irene, glowing with righteous indignation.

Irene sighed delightfully.

"We've jolly well got to lose them!" he yelled again, startling himself at his own vehemence.

Cholmondely thrust another bill into the driver's coat pocket. Looking down, the chauffeur saw the color. At impossible speed they began rounding corners. Up Sixth Avenue to Twenty-seventh Street. Across Twenty-seventh to Eighth Avenue. Up Eighth to Thirty-first Street and across to Lexington Avenue, past fixed-post men, only to hear the rapping of night sticks upon pavements, the shrill siren of police whistles, and an added force of pursuers, all reducing the chances of ultimate escape to a mere fraction.

Down Lexington Avenue they turned,

missing a fire engine at Twenty-sixth Street by the barest breath. All New York seemed leagued against him. Before his horrified gaze arose pictures of jail, headlines four inches high in the morning papers. And the girl who had stood by him so bravely, this stranger—who had trusted—he couldn't get her into such notoriety! There was only one chance left for him.

Uptown again they tore along Fifth Avenue, zigzagging back and forth on side streets—through Twenty-eighth to Seventh Avenue and up Seventh Avenue to Thirty-first; across Thirty-first to Fifth again and up Fifth Avenue to Thirty-fifth; through Thirty-fifth to Sixth Avenue and on and on, in and out, now losing the pursuers for a fraction of a minute, and now with them in full pursuit.

"The next time we lose them I'm going to jump, what?" he whispered hoarsely. "Don't scream!" he added quickly as the girl opened her mouth with that apparent intention. "And don't let the chauffeur know I've gone until he jolly well has to!"

He drew another bill from his pocket. "Give him this and shut his mouth. I never was here. What?"

The girl nodded, her eyes large with fright.

"Keep going—" His words came in quick staccato. "Keep—going—as long—as you can—and don't forget—I wasn't here."

He looked quickly through the small window.

"Got to do it quick—and—and—thank—you," he managed to gasp, even in his excitement his courtesy not forsaking him—quite.

"Good luck!" she whispered. "And—I hope you'll be happy!"

Happy! All he asked was to be lucky! He had forgotten all about his bride!

THE car was rocking in its mad speed as they tore into Fifty-second Street. With every nerve tense he peered into the semidarkness ahead. Nearly in the center of the street was a low-bodied motor truck, going at a fair enough rate of speed in the same direction to make the jump possible. Silently he opened the door and crouched on the running-board, fearful lest his chauffeur should discover his intent. It was but the work of an instant, so rapidly did his car overtake the slower truck, but it seemed ages to Cholmondely as he clung, balancing and ready to make the spring with a courage born of desperation. Instinct alone released the taut nerves that set his muscles into action, and sent him flying through space, landing half dazed on the truck's broad back, where he lay half hidden by its forward load. With difficulty he pulled himself completely out of sight just as the pursuing vehicles veered around the corner. His lately deserted car turned north on Seventh Avenue, his new vehicle following suit, but so much more slowly that the whole chase swept by him—a noble sight when viewed from his point of vantage.

And, now that it no longer menaced, a sight that somewhat restored his good nature!

The last car disappeared in the distance. The last yelling bystander lost his interest and vanished miraculously into nowhere.

Then he dropped, limp but victorious, from the back of the providentially provided truck. His throat was dry. His hand was shaking. Hatless he was, his lark turned into a wild adventure, but the sight of Hector's, a few blocks away, spelled for him a quieting drink and a chance to regain his accustomed poise.

He hastened his steps and then stopped on the threshold, amazed and unbelieving.

He saw *her!*

For being tall he could see well above the ground glass of the revolving door.

For a moment he seemed to lose all power to move. And then the blood rushed to his head. A great wave of fury possessed him.

She was the one to blame for all this wild excitement, his hairbreadth escape of a night in the lock-up. And—by Gad—he'd have that kiss anyway! It was the old, primitive desire of man to beat his woman into submission.

Her party were gathering their wraps preparatory to leaving. He noted that she was merry. A smile lurked around the corners of her mouth. Undoubtedly she was thinking of him—of his failure. He fed his vanity to that extent. There was a touch of triumph in the toss of her head as she came down the aisle, humming softly the air the orchestra was playing.

The sight entirely pleased him. It warmed his heart and settled his shattered nerves.

The long hand of the clock was pointing to midnight as she stepped laughingly into the revolving door.

But as the door swung her compartment around, he stepped in.

For one fleeting second they were alone.

In a flash he had bent over her and as quickly encircled her with his arm, and lifting her face to his, kissed her.

She saw only his calm effrontery, the careless, indifferent ease with which he had kept his word, and she hated him.

The revolving door, swinging behind her relentlessly, pushed her into the street, while he passed on into the restaurant.

But as she turned, she caught a quick glimpse of his blond head and the crinkles at the corners of his eyes. Fate had evened up the scales for him and he was content.

HOW a modernist would have reveled in splotches of color, angles, cubes and high lights, could he have gathered together all the various emotions caused by Guy's escapade, into a giant kaleidoscope!

There were, for instance, the flaming reds of anger of Louis and Jaques Riano, proprietors of the Beauchanson. The yellow flare of powder! Photographers filming the wreckage! Dull green doubting of blasé reporters! And then the rosy glow of unctuous cheer when curiosity brought unheard-of patronage!

For contrast was Willard, cool gray with satisfaction that he had escaped the robbery; and pale pink with emotion that Penny had at last succumbed to his none too ardent wooing.

Then Irene, she of the taxicab, hitting the ultimate peaks of color. Shifting high lights of pent-up thrills bursting for utterance.

And Penny, flashing yellows, greens and passionate purples. Acids burning! Maddening gloom! That she, a star reporter, should have been so unlucky as to leave the Beauchanson before the riot! And all on account of that beastly Britisher and his asinine threat!

And Cholmondely, the culprit, smiling dreamily in a haze of violet rays, healing balm to a contented soul.

Last of all was Barker, blue, deep impenetrable blue! His master had arrived home in rumpled clothing, minus hat and stick, and at this very moment was deeply engrossed in the account of a disgraceful affair, after ordering seven different morning papers to be brought to his bedside together with strong coffee.

Everybody's Magazine, September, 1924

Barker lifted his master's torn clothes and shook his head. "Four quid to the Irish Republic and kissing a girl!" he mumbled. It looked as if Cholmondely had tried to do both. Cholmondely was too intrigued by the imagination of the various news writers to notice; too content with his Arabian Nights adventure to bother; too perplexed concerning the elusive allure of a particular pair of lips to care!

Penny alone insisted upon action to relieve her wrath. Her suspicious eyes studied the reports, weeding out the truth with intuitive skill. The only weak spot seemed to be the boarding-school miss in the pursued taxi. And her jaundiced judgment sniffed at the chauffeur's story that he had thought the whole excitement the mischief of a wedding party. Fishy! Extremely fishy! Penny sniffed, and determined to find the girl. And the more guileless the girl, the less she intended to believe her.

The Ansonia became Penny's destination and after interviews a plenty with bellhops, maids and taxi drivers, she discovered by fair means or foul that the young lady had driven all the way to Jersey after the episode. More suspicious still!

Picture, then, Irene, guiltily self-conscious jumping at every sound, facing Penny's ingratiating smile.

"You're a reporter," she gulped.

"We're preparing a series of boarding-school stories," Penny began.

Irene sighed, both in disappointment and relief. Penny grinned inwardly.

"Of course, we understand nothing ever happens to boarding-school girls—"

Irene bit her lip hard to keep from speaking.

"And naturally they never see much that is going on in the outside world."

And now Irene was smiling with what she considered to be a woman-of-the-world smile.

"For instance, should an escaping criminal—"

"He wasn't a criminal!" Swift, indignant denial.

"Who wasn't?"

Irene was sulky now.

"IT'S too bad," pursued Penny, "that one who helps an escaping criminal becomes equally guilty before the law. Now in case of murder, he'd be electrocuted."

"But he wasn't a criminal; he was a bridegroom." Irene was angry.

"That's just the same!" snapped Penny. "Besides, who told you so?"

"He did! And I guess I'd know if a man was lying to me!"

"Oh, of course!" agreed Penny soothingly. "Any one would. Now when he came out of the restaurant and jumped into your taxi—"

"You needn't be sarcastic," retorted Irene. "If you could have heard him you would have known he couldn't lie!"

Almost, Penny was envious of Irene's sublime faith.

"He was so grand-looking, tall and awfully blond with the darkest eyes and a ring on his finger with the classiest coat of arms, and an English accent like in plays—" There was no stopping the romantic Irene once the floodgates of confidences were loosened. "—and funny crinkles when he laughed in the corners of his eyes—"

It was Penny now who gasped involuntarily.

"And a—a man like that came out of the Beauchanson and got into your cab?" she demanded.

"Yes, sir, just like that. And he said the crowd had stolen his bride and he just had to find her again. Only so many taxis began chasing us we had to get away." Irene subsided sullenly once more.

"And he left you near Rector's," Penny murmured, feeling beaten completely.

"How did you know?" Irene demanded.

"Oh, I saw him! We've got him from there on." A wave of color suffused her cheeks. "He wasn't a thie—" Penny stopped short. How did she know what Cholmondely was? How did any one know? Maybe he had not intended kissing her at all. Maybe he had seized upon that as a ruse to explain any disorder should he be caught. There had been jewels stolen last night. She leaned forward excitedly.

"Listen, Miss Dorr. You have behaved very intelligently in this matter. I want to ask one thing from you. Don't mention the affair to any one. Once you get into the hands of the police—"

"But he wasn't a criminal—"

"To a New York policeman every one is a criminal," Penny persisted. "If you drove a car you'd know that."

Irene was silenced. Penny's graveyard gloom completely enveloped her. Not for worlds would she utter another word concerning her adventure.

And in that mood Penny left her, the future only lightened by Penny's promise to telephone her and take her through the newspaper offices some day soon. The back kick to that promise Irene did not even vaguely guess.

QUAINT is the philosophy born of war and newspaper reporting. A truly normal person, considerate of the rights of others, honest and self-respecting, will lie, steal or spy without compunction when intent upon either trade. And either of these is as nothing compared to the self-righteousness of a woman humiliated.

Brazenly Penny laid her plans. Were Cholmondely guilty, the sight of Irene would probably upset him. If he were a thief, there would be loot hidden somewhere. This was her discovery and she intended working it out.

This accounts for Irene's presence at Arthur's a few nights afterward when Cholmondely walked unsuspiciously in. Point number one was established immediately. Cholmondely *was* the man in the taxi with Irene.

But for a guilty man he was strangely at ease. As a matter of fact he did not remember Irene. At best she had been but a hazy figure with a reassuring voice—an escape from catastrophe. He had not tried to see her face.

It took Irene some time to edge close to him. Suddenly:

"Did you find her?" she breathed into his ear.

He looked up quickly, amazed.

"Your bride!" she shot at him.

Almost he started. Then he turned and stared deliberately into her eager face.

"My dear child, I haven't the faintest idea, don't you know—"

Irene nearly gasped aloud.

That was enough for Penny. For unmitigated nerve, and ingratitude for help in time of need, Cholmondely had them all beaten!

Virginia had drifted into the party with Ford and they both engaged Irene's attention. Cholmondely was discussing Einstein with Arthur. Penny decided to carry out her plans concerning point number two.

This necessitated getting as near to the outer door as possible and sliding out at the first opportunity.

Bess was at home when Penny arrived breathlessly at their apartment. She waited, however, unseen in the living-room; motionless until she was sure that whatever Penny was doing would be well on its way. Then Bess appeared in the doorway of the bedroom.

Penny hastily thrust a bundle behind her. Bess's eyes narrowed.

"Don't tell that you saw me at home here, Bess," began Penny hurriedly. "I was over to Arthur's and I just had to get something."

"What were you doing at Arthur's?"

"Oh, nothing. Just went up there with Willard and a new girl who is crazy about Arthur."

Bess tried to appear unconcerned. "Better run over, Bess. They're having a fine time. I'll be right back."

Bess was irresolute. "Guess I'll call him up," she said.

Penny tapped her foot impatiently until Bess had done so and been urged to join the party. Bess stopped in the doorway again on the way out.

"I don't know what you're up to," she began.

Penny looked at her reproachfully.

"But some day there's going to be an end to your scrapes because some day I won't be around to help you out of them."

"When have I ever been in a scrape?" Penny demanded guiltily.

"The time you thought you were robbing the German consulate and got into a private house instead, and the time you thought Morgan's butler was a thief and shot at him when he was trying to open a window in his own house."

"I didn't hit him."

"And the time you stole the automobile—"

"I thought it had been stolen."

"And the time you were nearly caught in a crap game raid hiding in the dumbwaiter—"

"You know I thought Jimmy Ford was there—"

"I'm only just reminding you what bum hunches you get." With that Bess went out and slammed the door, sure that Penny was up to some mischief which might prove her undoing.

It was a tough-looking person who came to the door of Cholmondely's apartment house a few minutes later. A slattern almost, who questioned the hallboy about the desirability of working for such a man. The hallboy was voluble. He told her of Barker and the position of the apartment, what the rooms were and how located. And Penny confided that she "wouldn't work there, nohow."

Nevertheless she managed to watch her chance to climb the stairs to the roof when the hallboy was on the elevator. From the roof she discovered the fire escape leading to Cholmondely's window, which same window she promptly jimmied.

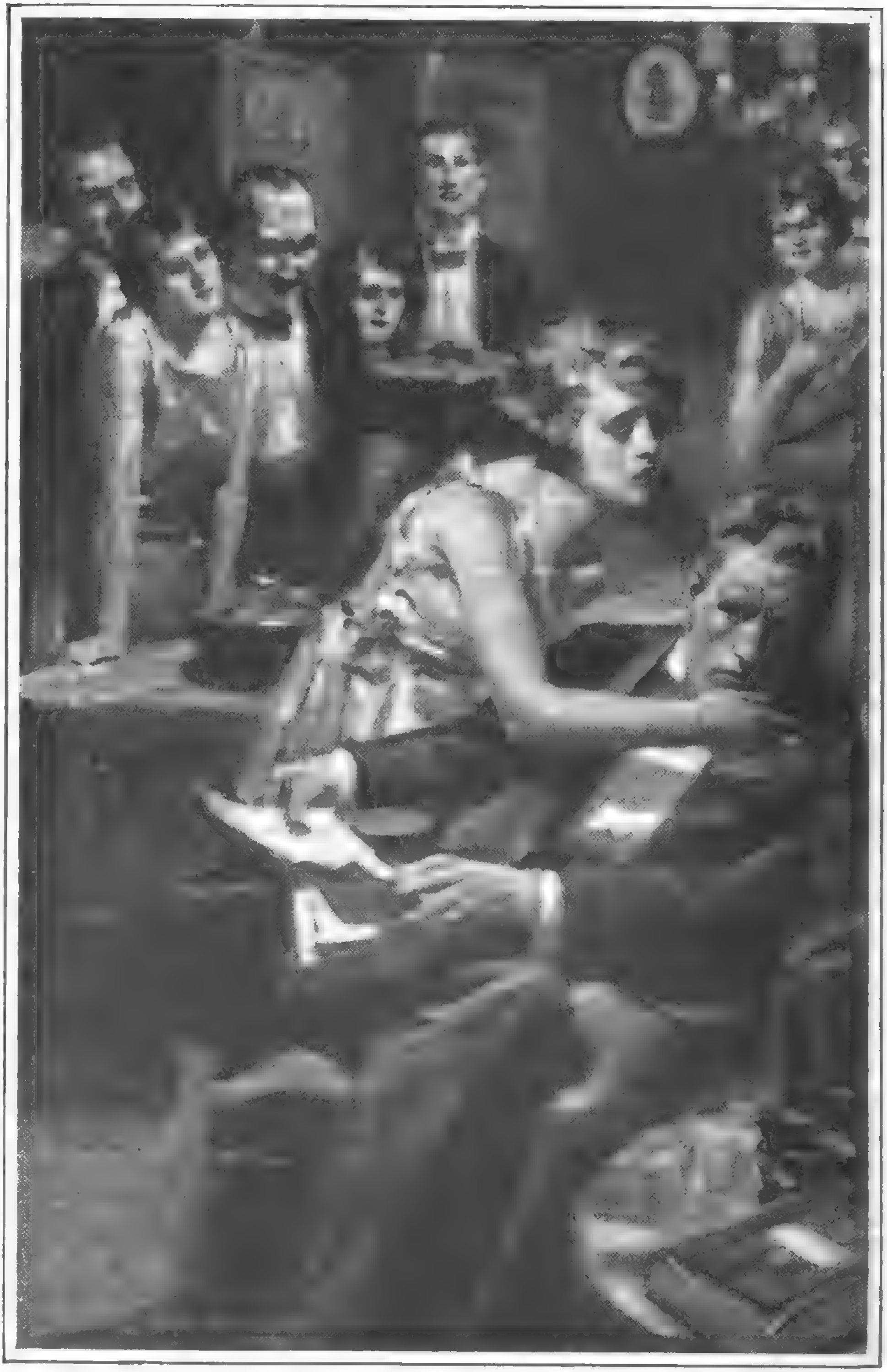
Cautiously she made her way across the floor and into the bedroom. It was a simple task to search the bureau drawers, they were so well ordered. The pockets of all his clothes came under similar scrutiny, quickly, efficiently.

LISTENING for Barker's footfalls, she essayed a search of the living-room. This, too, yielded nothing. Then a new thought came. Ever so carefully she returned to the bedroom. It was as she had guessed. A small wall safe was concealed behind the headboard of Cholmondely's bed.

She studied it a moment with the aid of her flashlight. It offered no difficulty to her clever hands taught to do secret-service work during the war. She turned the knob slowly until the tumblers fell under her sensitive fingers. Her breath caught sharply at the sight which met her gaze when the door was opened.

An emerald ring! Two diamonds set in platinum and a string of pearls with an old-fashioned clasp! There were several pins of value. Barely hesitating, she tossed them into her handbag and closed the safe. Now her breath became stifled and she realized the strain she was under. Realized, too, with a sickening dread, that she had not expected to find any such things. That she had not wanted to find them! Fighting against emotions concerning Cholmondely! She had her foot on the window sill. The room was suddenly flooded with light. Barker stood behind her.

"I came down the fire escape from the roof," she explained, wondering where her voice came from and why it did not tremble. "I got locked out. Forgot my key. Got in



"Chivalry, in these days of feminine supremacy, forces me to my duty." Oh, the teasing mockery in her voice! "Knowing he would not dare—I must go to him!"

the wrong window." She smiled in what she hoped was disarming fashion. "Guess mine is the floor below. Sorry!"

She climbed out slowly and flashed a parting smile at Barker, who was too dazed to move. It was several minutes later when Barker tried to lock the window that he discovered it had been jimmied, but a glance around the room showed that nothing had been disarranged and he promptly dismissed suspicion. By that time Penny was strolling out of the front door of the building after thoughtfully ringing the elevator bell on the fifth floor.

WHEN Penny finally returned to Arthur's she found the excitement at its height. Forfeits had been the game and most of them had been paid. As Jimmy Ford had conceived them they had been crowded with thrills and laughter. Penny, slipping into the room as unobtrusively as she had left, was overwhelmed with the hilarity of her friends. Somehow it seemed rather terrible in the light of her new knowledge. Cholmondely, even, presented a disheveled appearance due to the fact that he had lost his tie in the game. Just at this moment he looked as if he might be a thief or any other disreputable character.

Jimmy was kneeling blindfolded on the floor in front of Irene.

"The last forfeit," cried that irrepressible person.

She laid a peculiarly carved ring against Ford's perspiring brow. But as her fingers closed over it, its peculiar carvings attracted her attention. Her eyes dilated and she turned to Cholmondely, with a look of horror.

"Oh, let this bird tell a story," said Ford, tired of inventing.

Irene, staring at Cholmondely, turned the ring slowly in her fingers until the coat of arms was plainly discernible.

"The owner of this ring," she said in a dramatic voice, "should be able to tell a very good story."

Cholmondely looked distinctly surprised.

It was at this point that Penny decided to make her announcement. Her voice was low but coolly clear.

"Just telephoned to 'the office," she drawled. "They've discovered the man who started the riot at the Beauchanson."

The effect was instantaneous. Guy's startled surprise, however, was lost in the general eager questioning. Only Penny noted it. Her eyes were baffling as they rested upon his bewildered countenance. "They will probably arrest him in the morning." The tone was inconsequential and interest once again centered upon Guy, who was trying to act unconcerned.

Irene stood irresolute but a warning glance from Penny restored her poise even though her faith had been shattered. The ring had established Cholmondely as her companion in that wild ride. He had denied knowing her. He was not a bridegroom; ergo, he must be a thief. And she had helped him to escape! An accomplice was equally guilty before the law! Irene might readily be excused for feeling a bit ill.

Cholmondely was clearing his throat preparatory to beginning his story.

"I say," he asked, "what shall I tell about?"

"You might"—Irene hoped that she was being sardonic—"tell about a ring."

The tone annoyed Cholmondely vaguely. He did not even slightly guess why Irene treated him so oddly. He did wish he could remember the story about losing a fish and finding a ring, or losing a ring and finding a fish.

"I'll tell about a boy," he began.

"And a ship going down at sea," augmented Ford, afraid that interest might lag.

"Yes, yes, indeed, and the wreckage floating shoreward." He could find the ring among the wreckage.

"And the young lad and his nurse on shore watching," said Ford, helpfully, afraid of Cholmondely's limitations.

"At last," said Cholmondely getting into stride, "some of the wreckage was washed ashore. The lad and his nurse hastened to examine it. It was with the greatest amazement that they found—"

"A box!" cried Grant.

"The box was double-padlocked and of solid iron, but they jolly well managed to open it. To their amazement they found—"

"A basket," said Virginia, who liked to make things difficult.

"And in the basket—" Cholmondely looked at her defiantly. Now was a very good chance to introduce the ring if they would only give him a chance.

"And in the basket, what do you think they found!"

"A baby!" cried Irene, before he could go on.

CHOLMONDELY swallowed a few times while he decided whether to contradict her or not.

"A baby," he finally agreed.

"Was it alive?" asked Grant.

"Certainly," said Cholmondely coldly.

"Some baby!" said Grant admiringly.

"Around the baby's neck was a ribbon to which was attached—"

"A ring," cried Irene.

Cholmondely bowed his head to keep from smiling. Grant started to guffaw, but Arthur caught his arm and pointed to Irene's eager flushed face.

"And after that—" Irene broke the stillness.

"Why, naturally," interposed Virginia, who thought Cholmondely had taken punishment enough, "the ring was identical with the one worn by our young hero. The baby proved to be his brother lost with his young mother at sea."

Ford pretended to weep.

"But after that," pursued Irene, intent upon getting the history of that ring at any cost, "when they grew up—"

Cholmondely was impressed by the accusing light in Irene's eye. Granted that she was the girl in the taxicab, what difference did it make? Why did she hold his ring as if it had blood on it? And Penny! Why the paleness and the trembling lip she seemed striving so hard to control? Why did they hang upon this grotesque story as if it mattered?

"Tell them about when they grew up, old man," Grant insisted, intrigued by Irene's keen interest.

"Why—er—yes, of course, old dear. The baby became a bit of a rake. He looked so jolly much like our hero his escapades were frequently causing the lad considerable trouble. Er—he—er—" Cholmondely thought that rather neat; nevertheless, he wiped the perspiration from his brow.

"Many a time the lad was arrested for his brother's crimes," Virginia explained sadly, roused to championing the under dog. "But why should we intrude further upon another's grief?" She held out her hands expressively.

Plainly, Irene had not thought of that. She handed the ring to Cholmondely reluctantly. There was so much she could tell if she would.

"But an iron box does not float," commented Willard, who had clung manfully to the opening paragraph.

"Well, you see," explained Grant helpfully, "the baby's lungs, being full of air, buoyed it up."

"Oh, yes, of course," agreed Willard, "I never thought of that."

"That's all right," said Ford. "It puzzled me at first."

Penny looked over at Willard, who was talking earnestly to Irene. His face was lighted with interest. In their mutual regard of this utter inanity they had discovered a bond of understanding. Irene wanted ever so much to blurt out the entire story to this serious individual who did not make sport of a vital matter. She could read between the lines of Cholmondely's story, if no one else could, and her heart ached for his secret sorrow in such a brother.

They looked up simultaneously to find Penny signaling them and guiltily hastened to her. Penny had abruptly decided to go home.

At the door, however, she gave her parting warning. In her heart she wished that Cholmondely would take heed and leave the city that night.

"Watch the papers sharp tomorrow," she counseled the crowd. "Unless Raffles gives us the slip tonight he has had his last social success; has taken his last ride."

Ford turned to Cholmondely as the door closed behind them.

"You didn't happen to kiss her the night of the riot, did you?" he inquired casually. Her glance at Cholmondely had not escaped his watchful eye.

Cholmondely flushed. "Certainly not and damn your impudence!" he lied angrily.

"Because," Ford continued, unruffled, "she's capable of framing you nicely if you put it over on her. Women, I might remind you, are cats and they can scratch as easily as cuddle."

Cholmondely decided it was time to leave.

"There's mystery here," Ford commented to the remaining party. "A ring, a strange young lady who glares, a woman humiliated and a darned good sport. Gee whiz! I wish I was in on it."

NOTHING happened the next day for the simple reason that Penny did not turn in the jewels at headquarters. In fact she did not mention them at all. She told herself it was because of the smug complaisance of the head detective on the job. He was so cocksure and so noncommittal. Furthermore, he had decided to give nothing to the papers until the case was complete. Thus Penny reasoned her coup would be more sensational later when the police department were willing to admit that they had failed. In fact their obstinacy in refusing either help or information gave Penny a real excuse for protecting Guy for a while. She had the jewels. That was the main thing.

As for Cholmondely, he was entirely ignorant that they had been removed from his apartment. His main concern had been to look innocent and act innocent of something of which he was innocent. The supposition is that one would go about his affairs and forget it. Unfortunately human nature is not so reasonable. There was no doubt that during the confusion at the Beauchanson, jewels had been stolen. And the facts against him were too damning to be thrust lightly aside. Every step behind him seemed a shadowing detective, every ring at the door a warrant for his arrest. The truth was too unreasonable and he could not think of a reasonable lie. And he could not tell the truth, however silly, without involving Penny. Even Barker's attitude became more and more accusing. At times he felt already arrested. He wished that he had taken Penny's advice and left town.

He did stroll into the Beauchanson, deciding to brazen the thing out if possible; outwardly composed but with confidence oozing at every step. His clothes suddenly fitted him too loosely; all but his collar, which was too tight. He knew his attitude would tell against him in a crisis. He seemed to be swallowing incessantly.

He met Chase at the entrance and recalled that he had been there on the fateful night. Chase was eager to tell about it, insisting that he could identify the fellow as he had got a good look at him. Guy liked him better. He would make a good alibi witness for him. Chase was garrulous. He was going to paint a picture of little Irene Dorr, Penelope Pelham's friend, and expressed a conviction that Willard, Penny's fiancé, was crazy about the youngster. Cholmondely did not enjoy any of this news and broke hurriedly away. Perhaps, he thought, it would be better to go out of the city.

It had never occurred to Cholmondely before that Penny might have a fiancé. It was not a pleasant thought. Also it puzzled him. Two weeks previously, the young lady had admitted that she had never been kissed. Two weeks previously, then, she had not been affianced. One week since, he had risked life and liberty to kiss her again, and tonight he quite expected to repeat the offense. Why, dash it all, it was not decent for her to marry another man after that! Cholmondely hurried through his luncheon. Now he did not care whether waiters recognized him or not. Let them!

An idea had come to him. Straightway after leaving the Beauchanson, he telephoned Penny's office. Penny had left town for a week. Now when, he thought, did she decide that? Her address? It was extremely important to know at once. The newspaper willingly obliged. There was a bulldog grimness on Cholmondely's distinctly British face.

THE afternoon sun sifted through the tree branches in long tremulous shadows. Birds trilled softly in the stillness. Penny leaned back in her comfortable lawn chair and regarded Willard's serenely satisfied countenance. Slowly, she turned her gaze to contemplate her surroundings. It was Willard's country place. The grass at her feet was Willard's. The trees about her were Willard's. The house of timber and stucco was Willard's. The house party which numbered herself, Bess and the now devoted Irene was Willard's. She herself, through some mysterious understanding never put into words, was Willard's. And surely nothing could have borne the stamp of respectability more thoroughly than these things of Willard's.

And yet this house party had been planned suddenly and successfully to protect Penny from the immediate consequences of her own rashness. This house with its ultra air of respectability was harboring criminals before the law. These trees were sheltering a bomb which might burst at any moment into a front-page scandal. Penny was musing about these matters, for the moment conscience-stricken. Aunt Jane appeared upon the front porch. She smiled benignly at the tranquil scene and returned indoors to her reading.

Irene and Bess began a game of clock golf. Penny's thoughts became complicated. She could not stand them. She could not stand the stern respectability of the place. She could not stand the stillness.

"Let's go riding," she suggested.

Willard tried to demur, but Penny suddenly had to get away; and Willard found himself protestingly getting into riding togs, grumbling that he had not been on a mount for ages, phoning for horses just the same. They arrived almost at the same moment that Penny, radiant in white coat and breeches and flaunting a scarlet tie, came down the front steps.

Irene watched them canter away.

"Isn't he wonderful?" she sighed.

Bess looked surprised but shrugged her shoulders.

"I suppose he'll make a good husband," she said unconvincingly.

Irene looked self-conscious.

"Though what Penny can see in him—"

"Penny!" cried Irene, dismayed. "I thought they were cousins."

"They are, of sorts. Their mothers were cousins."

Irene tried stanchly to go on with the game. Her cheeks were fiery and her hands trembled. Suddenly, without warning, she dropped her club and fled precipitately into the house.

"Now can you beat that!" murmured Bess, astounded. "What is there about Willard that I can't see?" She was sorely perplexed.

Bess turned toward the wooded road down which the pair had vanished, and then her brow knit in a worried frown. A bank of thunderclouds had rolled swiftly up from the north. Almost at that instant came an ominous roll of thunder. She wished they would come back.

Penny pressed her knees into her horse's sides, starting him off into a brisk canter. Willard tried to keep up but he could not. Every bone in his body ached with the jar of it.

"Penny," he tried to call, "it's going to rain!"

A heavy wind tore across the valley and twisted the bushes into writhing shapes. Small trees bent double. A brilliant flash of lightning lit the darkness. Penny's horse reared in fright. She grasped his mane frantically. There was another blinding flash.

The horse became crazed with fear. He leaped and plunged in a wild attempt to unseat the rider. Penny pulled herself forward upon his neck until she was riding like a jockey in the last quarter. Pirouetting now! A frenzied dance. The wind became a fury. Blinding dust enveloped her.

Willard, plodding along behind, caught sight of her for the first time since she had turned the bend. A glaring flash showed him horse and rider shooting several feet in the air. Cold sweat burst out on his forehead. He could not think what to do. No one had ever asked him to think!

THE noise of hoof-beats close behind him added terror to Penny's mount. With a plunge he tore down the road just as Willard reached for the bridle. Willard's riding-crop dropped from his nerveless fingers, catching her horse on the flank as he flew by. The animal broke into a wild gallop, terrified beyond control.

Penny strained her eyes into the darkness ahead. A new undertone! She wanted to scream. Around the curve ahead whirled a huge racer thundering out a forty-mile-an-hour pace. She shut her eyes, dreading the cry of the stricken horse!

Another blinding flash! A screech! A tearing, ripping noise and a crash! And then silence. Her horse stopped short, wrenching her arms at their sockets with the sudden jolt.

Across the path lay a giant maple. Beyond it an automobile upside down, twisted beyond repair.

Weak and unnerved, she dismounted, tied her horse to a tree branch and climbed across the barrier.

With ashen face Willard urged his horse on. He saw Penny's mount riderless. He saw the tree lying across the path. He dared not look down the bank where he knew she must be. He drew up close to the beast. It was queer! The horse had tied himself up. Fumblingly he tried to dismount.

A low voice called him. "Get me some whisky quick!"

He peered stupidly around. Penny was sitting upon the ground, holding a strange man's head in her lap.

"Whisky!" Penny repeated.

"I haven't any. I never drink it!" he gasped, and blinked.

"You must have it. If you didn't drink it you must have it!"

"But I don't carry it. Why should I carry it if I don't drink it?"

"Every man carries it nowadays for emergency. I suppose you don't carry a handkerchief because you don't sneeze."

Willard eyed her reproachfully. Tears stood in his light blue eyes.

"Are you going to get a doctor or something?" she demanded fiercely.

"Can't leave you alone with a strange man. Might be a thief."

Penny silenced his mutterings with a withering glance. Hastily he climbed back onto his horse and started.

Penny leaned over the man and drew his cap from his forehead. It was a thief! As if additional proof was necessary he had been flying across Jersey at forty miles an hour. Probably trying to escape. Then quite suddenly she knew why she had not turned the jewels over to the police; and yet she had sent Willard back to bring whom? Would it be the country doctor? Or perhaps strangers who would put him in jail? Her heart started pounding. Jail! She could not bear the thought. With a sob she threw both arms around him, crying for him to open his eyes. To speak! Listening for Willard's returning hoofbeats or the purr of a motor. It was horrible! Maybe he was dead! She did not want him to be dead. He must wake up and get away. Quick! She called his name over and over, kissing him wildly. "I won't have you die! I won't let you! I won't have it at all!" She was beside herself with fear!

AS FOR Cholmondely, he seemed to be falling, falling, and then he hit suddenly with a gentle thud upon the softest, coolest spot in the world. Everything was peaceful around him. He was quite—quite comfortable. He opened his eyes. Of course—now he remembered. He was dead and this must be—it couldn't be heaven! He shut his eyes and sighed softly. All over him was such a delicious sense of rest, with not the slightest inclination to move. He was amazingly glad to be dead. He wanted to lie there forever.

And then something bent down close, very close! He didn't want to move, lest he frighten it away. Something soft and fragrant laid itself on his breast, then cautiously, with all the shyness of a wood nymph, gradually moved until it was pressed close to his lips. It was a cheek! He held his breath! And then, wonder of wonders, two slim arms went around his neck, and lips, so velvety that they seemed like flower petals, pressed his own. It was a wonderful moment! Almost, he caught his breath. Again and again the lips sought his and with each kiss came a more definite feeling of returning consciousness. Each one was sweeter and more to be desired, but each brought him nearer earth, so to speak. He wanted tremendously to return the caress and yet he felt it would not be the thing to do.

He remembered it all now. Driving to get home before the shower should break. And then a crash! He must be hurt! But what was the girl doing here? He was about to open his eyes when she kissed him again, fiercely, as if suddenly overwhelmed with fright.

"You've got to be alive. I won't let you die!" she said savagely. "I won't have it. I won't have it at all!"

Penny! He waited a moment, hoping she would do it again. Instead she laid him abruptly back upon the ground.

He sighed audibly and opened his eyes. After a reasonable interlude he spoke.

"I say," he began, surprised to find how light his voice sounded.

"Oh, do please get up quick!" she begged. "You must. They're coming for you. They may jail you."

Cholmondely sat up.

Just why they should do that was not quite clear to Cholmondely in his present bewildered state, but he tried hard to obey her. Fortunately it was his shoulder that was sprained rather than his legs or back.

He managed to stand up.

"Sort of shaky," he apologized with a twisted smile.

Penny helped him on to her horse, trying not to notice when he winced painfully. He looked foolishly around when he had mounted.

"What ought I to do?" he asked. His head seemed extraordinarily thick.

"Ride," she commanded. She could hear the rumble of a motorcar. "Ride fast!"

Cholmondely did not believe that he could do that.

"Why do you want me to—to get away?" he asked her unexpectedly, pulling the horse up short.

"Don't stop," she cried. "Quick!" She struck the horse a sharp slap on the flank.

The jolting hurt him cruelly but he kept it up until he was well out of sight. Then he stopped and dismounted clumsily. It had occurred to him that had the tree not fallen he would undoubtedly have killed her. The thought sickened him. He leaned unsteadily against his horse. He could not fool himself any further. He loved her! And then a glory sang in his heart. For though she assuredly thought him a thief, she had kissed him. How she had kissed him! Then in spite of the pain and the fearsome thoughts, he grinned until the crinkles formed in the corners of his brown eyes. He suddenly remembered that it was Thursday and what his real errand was in Jersey. He could stand there forever now. He had nothing to do for a week.

Perhaps the same thought had come to Penny. Anyway it was a crestfallen young lady who explained incoherently to Willard that the man had insisted upon riding away immediately after Willard had left her.

"IRENE is in love with Willard!" Bess made the declaration from the vantage point of the bed, where she had been watching Penny for some time through half-closed eyelids. Penny drew her dressing-robe closer around her slim body and stood up. She had been sitting by the window most of the long night, thinking—trying not to think and trying to think straight. Knowing that under the test she had failed! That nothing in the world would ever make her give the jewels to the police. The best she could do was to return them to their hiding-place and go away where she would never see nor hear of him again.

"That's good," she answered listlessly.

"You have a gentle heart for a suffering sister," said Bess.

"Well, she doesn't have to marry him if she doesn't want to," argued Penny.

Bess swallowed hard. Her method for handling Penny was never to show surprise. She could not resist a fervent "Thank Heaven!" under her breath.

"Don't be emotional," Penny counseled.

Bess jumped out of bed and proceeded to bathe and dress. Now they could go back to normal, with Willard disposed of.

She popped back into the bedroom just in time to catch a glint of jewels which Penny was hastily thrusting into her bag. She stopped stock-still on the threshold.

"Who committed the robbery?" she asked quietly.

Penny gave a jump. "No one that I know of," she answered, trying to be cool about it.

Bess stood irresolute, finally deciding to bide her opportunity. She realized that she had been premature in expecting normality in Penny at any time.

They descended shortly to the dining-room to find Willard jumpy and peevish as one reveling in self-pity.

He barely looked up when they entered. His grapefruit was slipping and sliding and answering back with mean squirts in his eye whenever he attacked it. Besides, he ached all over. He had the presentiment that Penny was going to be unsympathetic.

He ate in silence for some time.

Finally: "For goodness sake, Willard, stop prodding that bacon. It's nicely dead already. It's probably been dead a long time—"

"Ugh!" Now he could not touch the bacon and it was the only decent thing on the table. Besides, it brought it all back—that word "dead."

"Poor Willard!" said Irene, tiptoeing into the room lest she upset his nerves.

There was a girl for you.

Penny excused herself abruptly. When Bess arrived breathlessly upstairs she found Penny with bag packed, writing a note which sounded like a renunciation.

"Help me out of this," she begged. "It's best for every one."

"I'd do anything to keep you from marrying that pinhead," Bess ejaculated fervently.

"Then let me out the back door, there's a dear, and don't say a word if you never see me again."

"Say, what—" began Bess.

Penny clapped her hand quickly over her mouth. "Sh!"

A maid was calling Miss Bess to the phone and Penny had to hide her hat quickly because Aunt Jane stopped in the hall to say good morning as soon as the door opened.

When Bess returned her face was flushed with excitement. She could scarcely restrain herself until Aunt Jane had passed on down the stairs. Then she carefully closed the door and faced Penny.

"Guy Cholmondely's been robbed!"

Penny gripped the edge of the table, but her face did not change.

"All of his mother's jewelry!" Bess was eyeing her steadily. "His man recalls a girl!" Bess fairly spat the words. "Got into the apartment by mistake, she said." Bess almost relented when she saw how white Penny had become. "The police have a full description and are on the trail." Bess slammed her hat on. "I'm going to town with you," she announced.

Penny suddenly burst out laughing, in an uncontrollable hysteria.

"He isn't a thief," she kept saying to herself. "He isn't a thief."

"Who isn't?" demanded Bess. "If you ever read the papers you'd know they settled that Beauchanson affair yesterday. Caught the fellow and got everything back. It was in this morning's papers."

"I haven't read the papers," said Penny weakly. Her knees were trembling but she was manfully trying to keep up.

Here Irene burst into the room. "Poor Cholmondely!" she exclaimed, waving a big headline from a scarehead sheet in front of Penny.

Penny's head was whirling. She dared not read. "Why poor Cholmondely?" she asked in a voice she tried in vain to keep steady.

"His poor brother, you know, the rake," Irene began.

For the second time within five minutes Penny felt as if she had been struck in the face. "Idiot!" she said to herself.

"I wouldn't ever mention it," she said as soon as she could find voice. "You don't want to be drawn into it." This silenced Irene. "Willard hates notoriety," Penny put in as an effectual afterthought.

"Thank God, everything's over," said Penny when Irene had decided to return to Willard.

Bess looked at her thoughtfully. "Everything except that the police are on your trail," she said spitefully.

"I'd forgotten that." Penny was stung into action. "Let's get out of here quick!"

She pinned the note to the bureau and cautiously, listening for footsteps, they slipped down the backstairs and out of the house.

FOR a woman being pursued, Penny acted strangely. Bess could not get a word out of her about the affair although she tried every tactic known to her ingenious brain. Only one of her many suggestions even got a rise. It was the apparently innocent remark about Cholmondely's Thursday threat. Penny's indignant denial that he had gone through with it was stopped in mid-air by a sudden, illuminating thought. It was so startlingly comprehensive that tears of vexation stood in Penny's blue eyes. Certainly Cholmondely had not been around on Thursday evening for his second adventure. But now Penny understood clearly that it was because he quite well knew that the kiss for that day was already his—given freely, by herself. He had been conscious, the bounder, when she had poured out her hysterical words of endearment. He had been willing to let her make a fool of herself even at the moment when she was risking her future as a newspaper woman—her honor as a citizen —to shield him.

It was maddening. Never to her dying day should he know the truth. To this end she tried on three consecutive nights to return the stuff to his rooms. It was without avail. Had Bess been less concerned about her own affairs she would have worried considerably. As it was her head was in the clouds. Arthur had received a commission in the West. He and Bess decided to marry at once.

The announcement affected Penny strangely. She protested and entreated and cried. Bess was flattered, touched but somewhat surprised, even a trifle suspicious.

"Just think," said Penny, failing to impress Bess. "This is the last time we may ever see each other." Bess was getting ready to go out with Arthur and was not overobservant.

"The last time— What's the idea?" she asked absently. "I'm only going to be married. I'm not going to jail."

"I'd almost rather you were; I could take you jellies and things."

"That's a hospital," murmured Bess, brushing up her eyelashes into sweeping curves.

"Well, I'd rather have it a hospital."

"You're certainly cheerful."

"I can't help it. You don't know how lonesome it's going to be."

"And peaceful," finished Bess.

"How will I know what will happen to you out there alone in the West with a strange man?" Penny demanded suddenly.

"It's not a strange man. It's Arthur."

"How do you know what he is? He may be a gambler or a thief. You haven't known him long."

"Only a year," agreed Bess, too happy to care.

"I was reading today about a man killing a woman he'd known ten years, and the blood—"

"Stop, Penny! You make me nervous."

"Besides, there's the wild animals—"

"Too many movies, old thing," Bess commented, and slammed the door after her as she left the apartment.

Inspiration seized Penny as soon as she was alone. She must make one last try to return those jewels before Bess left New York. She depended so on Bess.

Thus it was that a slimmish young lad rang at the door of Cholmondely's apartment later that evening; rang the bell and hid until Barker, becoming curious, began an investigation.

It was then that the youngster slipped through the open door. Once inside, she made the dreadful discovery that Barker had not been alone. Penny's heart seemed to stop beating but she quickly slid around the bend in the hall and into the bedroom. The open closet door proved a refuge. Almost instantly a man appeared in the doorway.

"Who's there?" he demanded and opened the door wide.

Penny grasped the pole with both hands and drew her feet up to a level with the bottom of the clothing hanging there. It was Cholmondely himself staring straight at her but without seeing her.

"Strange!" he muttered. "I could have sworn I heard some one."

The doorbell rang and after some moments of waiting for Barker, Cholmondely went to answer it himself. It was Penny's one chance. She had to take it. Straight she made for the open fire-escape window. Not so quickly but Cholmondely heard her and with long strides reached the living-room when she was scarcely out of sight down the first flight.

A pistol shot rang out, making it necessary for Penny to vault the last railing over a fence into the next yard. Heads appeared through quickly opened windows. A police whistle sounded. There was the swift *pud-pud* of running feet and Penny climbing through a coal cellar on a neighboring street; and a dirty, ragged small boy tucked in the center of the spare tire of a speeding motorcar, stealing a ride.

BESS, coming into her darkened apartment, stopped short at an unmistakable scratching sound. Cautiously Bess reached for the small automatic which Penny had had during the war. The dumbwaiter door opened slowly. Bess jumped behind it. A foot had come through the opening.

"Don't shoot!" A shot rang out and struck the ceiling.

Penny stepped into the room, dusting herself with elaborate carelessness.

"Thank Heaven, you're a poor shot," she observed sarcastically.

Bess was angry. "Penelope Pelham, you'll be the death of me! Thank the Lord, I'm almost through with you. My nerves are jumpy anyway. A man followed us all the way home and you had me all worked up with your fool ideas about the West—"

Penny was looking at Bess strangely. "Did you have on that hat?" she queried.

"Of course I did. Do you think I changed it after I got home!" Her expression changed. "You didn't wear it when you were stealing those confounded jewels!"

Penny did not answer.

"Penny," she moaned, "if you get me arrested and stop my honeymoon, I'll never forgive you as long as I live."

"Give me the hat," demanded Penny in a sepulchral voice.

"What are you going to do with it?"

"I'm going to Albany on the next train if I can make it; if not I'm going to headquarters with the biggest fool story on Broadway and I'll be the laughingstock of every newspaper man in town." She snapped into her bedroom. Bess followed her to plead but Penny was adamant. When Bess knew it was of no use she breathed a sigh of relief. Life had been strenuous and she loved Penny—she did want to be married and live happily ever after.

In the meantime Cholmondely had recovered from his first excitement and begun to look around in earnest. In an instant he regretted his too hasty shooting. Had he only gone down the fire escape—the thought was unfinished. In his hand he held a small square of cambric. A small "P" was embroidered in one corner and the fragrance of Penny's soft lips crept to his nostrils. He had picked it from the floor of his closet. Cholmondely thought hard. Then he began a systematic search of his clothing. In an overcoat pocket he discovered all his lost valuables.

Then he sat down in a chair and began a logical working out of the problem in hand. When he had finished he closely approximated the truth in his results.

"Poor little Princess Goldilocks!" he murmured softly. "I'll call off the dogs of law and then—" He was wondering how he was going to go about telling her how marvelous she was.

He lifted the receiver from the hook.

Bess was sitting on the edge of the bed, wondering what she ought to do about it all, when the phone rang.

She poured everything she knew into Cholmondely's sympathetic ear.

VALIANTLY parading the red hat, Penny boarded the train for Albany. To her utter amazement and relief she was able to get the drawing-room. She had been seated only a few moments when there came a peremptory rap on the door. She opened it, trembling violently. She had never realized how terrible it was to be hunted.

Cholmondely stepped into the room and carefully closed the door behind him. Then, without waiting for explanation, he put both arms around her and held her close. It was so unexpected that she buried her head on his shoulder before she remembered that she hated him. And then it was too late. Besides, it did not matter. Or rather it did matter ever so much. She wanted to cling there forever and ever in the strength of his broad shoulders and the security of his strong arms.

He knew she was crying, so he held her a long time without speaking; even when the train started and he knew it would not stop for hours.

All of a sudden she broke away from his embrace, standing sternly forbidding before him; but when she at last looked into his face she was all Penny, laughing, golden-haired, mischievous Penny.

"It's Thursday!" she whispered in mock horror.

"So it is," he agreed, and the crinkles formed in the corners of his deep brown eyes. "Kiss me!" he commanded.

She obeyed.

"'Ods bodkins!" he cried with a swashbuckling air, because he liked her merry. "You will find Prince Charming neither a laggard nor a coward."

Then he kissed her again. . . .

Every one agreed it was scandalous, but adorable. So Bess had a wonderful time as soon as their telegram came and she could read it to the bunch.

It happened this way. They arrived at midnight. And after Cholmondely had seen her safely settled at the Ten Eyck he started for the Hampton. But instead he walked the hills of Albany for hours, unable to crowd all his happiness into one little room. Yet he was bright-eyed and fresh-cheeked when he met Penny for breakfast.

"Do you know, young man," she asserted solemnly over the grapefruit, "you've compromised me."

"I'm afraid you'll have to marry me at once," he threatened boldly.

"I quite intend to," she agreed calmly, "but not for that reason."

Their eyes met in an intimate caress that almost took his breath away.

"Last night," she said, trying to be matter-of-fact, "I made up my mind I could never let you go away from me again. You get into so much mischief."

"Last night," he amended, "I knew I never could go away from you again, unless I was coming back—to you."

So they had to get married. And that was what they wired Bess.

Everybody's Magazine, September, 1924

Adventures in a New Country

Vamos

Volstock, Tramp on Horseback, Enters an Argentine Race and Shows How to Beat a Fast Horse with a Slow One

By Arthur Mills

Illustration by D. C. Hutchison

WE WERE sitting outside the pulpería, discussing the forthcoming match between the chestnut horse of Miguel, son of the major domo at St. Martin, and a bay horse belonging to Volstock, a peon at the Tora.

There were Gomez, proprietor of the pulpería; Leonita, his daughter; old Donato and myself. A horse race in the "camp" is a matter of absorbing interest, and we had been engaged in argument all the afternoon, consuming innumerable matés as we talked.

"Maybe the chestnut horse is faster than the bay," Donato conceded to Gomez's objection.

He took the maté bowl from the hands of Leonita and sucked the bombilla long and thoughtfully.

Gomez, Leonita and I waited. It would have been worse than useless to attempt to hurry the old man. The least suspicion of such conduct on our part would have silenced him altogether. All of us, for our several reasons, wanted most desperately to hear his views.

In the whole province of Entre Ríos no one knew so much about horses as Donato.

He was nearer eighty than seventy, but he still rode to the pulpería on some young half-broken colt that needed teaching manners. He had been a famous horse-tamer himself in his day and was now employed in a more or less honorary capacity making harness up at the Tora. From his lips I had learnt anything I knew about Argentina.

A long burbling gurgle told that the maté bowl was empty. Donato handed it to Leonita.

"Maybe the chestnut is the faster," he repeated.

Leonita, instead of going immediately to the kitchen to refill the maté bowl, stood listening, her dark eyes fixed on the old gaucho's face. I guessed whom she wanted to win, but was thankful she did not go to fetch more maté as I felt if I drank any more of the bitter-tasting beverage I should be sick.

Gomez also listened. He, too, had a personal stake, being book-maker on these occasions. It would be comforting to be reassured by Donato that one of the horses had no chance whatever.

Seeing his daughter standing idle, he pointed to the kitchen. "Maté for the señores," he commanded. My heart sank.

"They will run for a great distance?" I asked.

"A quarter of a league," answered Donato.

Now in a race of six furlongs surely the fastest horse must win; yet Donato's manner plainly hinted pace would not be the deciding factor.

"There is Miguel," Donato pointed to a solitary figure on the sky line riding toward the pulpería.

"You can recognize a man at that distance!" I exclaimed.

"Señor, I know the horse; you see how he draws up the hind legs a little. He is a good horse, that chestnut, but—" Donato looked thoughtfully at Miguel.

Miguel pulled up in front of us. From his looks he might easily have been Donato's son. Both had sun-dried, pale coffee-colored skins, and eyes black as sloes and luminously bright, heritance of their Guarany Indian blood.

Miguel dismounted, fastened his horse to a post, shook each of us by the hand, and joined our table. Just then Leonita returned with a fresh bowl of the unpalatable maté. Fortunately the arrival of a newcomer diverted the concoction from the prescribed round.

WHILE Miguel took his maté his eyes wandered up and down Leonita in the manner of a man looking over a horse. He seemed satisfied, as well he might be, for a more attractive girl was not to be found in a thirty-league ride across the "camp."

Leonita was of medium height, long-limbed from waist to foot, with a clear white skin and most glorious dark eyes. She wore a plain holland skirt, fastened by a belt Donato had plaited for her. The only touch of color was a blue handkerchief tied in a sailor's knot round her neck.

Miguel regarded the handkerchief attentively. He knew Gomez kept none like it in his store, yet he had seen it before somewhere. All at once he remembered; the lingero Volstock had worn the handkerchief when he first came to the estancia. Miguel had noticed the handkerchief particularly, for it was an unusually fine one for a peon who was out of work to be wearing.

Had he dared he would have said something about seeing it now round Leonita's neck. But in such parts making personal remarks was dangerous. Gomez himself might not know the origin of the handkerchief. He might take a pleasantry as a reflection on his daughter, in which case Miguel knew he would shoot him where he sat. That was the worst of living in a country where there were no preliminaries to fighting, where a man never pointed a revolver without pulling the trigger, or drew a knife unless he meant to strike.

Miguel swallowed his curiosity and called for a glass of cana.

It was after six, and in twos and threes the peons were coming in from neighboring estates. Some had ridden three leagues, others six; no matter the distance, Gomez's store made a break in a life that began at dawn and ended with the setting of the sun.

Gomez robbed them, of course, like all owners of pulperías. He made from thirty to one hundred per cent profit on every article he sold, and as the night wore on the quality of his cana grew worse. Every peon knew these things and accepted them; having no choice except to stay away from the pulpería, which would have made life unbearably dull.

Gomez in consequence was rich. It was rumored he could retire with his savings to Buenos Aires at any time he chose, and that more than one of the neighboring estancieros would have been glad to marry his daughter.

"He will certainly never allow her to marry a mere peon," thought Miguel, whose father, as major domo at St. Martin, held a position of importance. He looked again at Volstock's handkerchief round Leonita's neck. "A fellow who is a mere gambler and adventurer without the price of a *criollo* from one week to another."

From Volstock's manner of living this seemed true; he had sold his troop of horses, and parted with all his silver-mounted saddlery. In a few short months he had changed from his gay debonair self to a slatternly object in frayed, soiled trousers, without even a pair of long boots or white coat for Sundays.

From first to last it might all be attributed to gambling. Never was man born in whose veins the spirit of chance burnt so restlessly. Throughout the neighborhood Volstock was known as a man who would gamble upon anything. He would put a month's wages on one throw of the *taba* (hock bone of a steer used as a sort of giant dice) or turn of a card. He had lost his troop of horses in this fashion, and also his silver harness.

At one time I had thought that Leonita would be the saving of him. For Volstock evidently adored her. But when it became plain that Gomez would never allow his daughter to marry a mere peon with nothing but his wages of three pounds a month, Volstock had gone back to his old ways.

Now he had matched his bay horse against Miguel's chestnut, an animal whose achievements were noted for miles around.

AFTER the fashion of the "camp" the match had been arranged a fortnight before, and had been a daily topic of conversation since. In a country where children begin to ride when they are three, there is not much that grown men have left to learn about horses. The merits of the chestnut and the bay had long been weighed to a hoof paring. Every one was agreed that Miguel's horse could beat the bay by a full two lengths.

Yet such are the chances and mischances of horse racing there were some who had doubts. Gomez was foremost among these. Though he said little, I could feel his misgivings instinctively. Why was the storekeeper so anxious? He was a rich man. The money had been wagered mostly on Miguel's chestnut at odds that would do him little harm if the horse won and plenty of good if by any chance it lost. No one I could think of could have put much money on Volstock's horse except Volstock himself, who had no money to invest. Then, too, there were the doubts of Donato. It was all most puzzling.

Volstock himself was the next arrival. A man who kept much to himself, he had ridden the five leagues alone.

Volstock frankly fascinated me more than any other personality in Entre Ríos, especially since I had learnt something of his history which few others knew. He had reached Argentina via Siberia, Japan, Chile and the Andes mountains. I had been able to be of some slight service to him over the affair of a man he had shot. That had been the time, and the only time, when he had told me anything about himself.

Since then, from the little I had seen of him, he had seemed frankly to be going to the devil. With the Russians all over the world—London, Paris, Monte Carlo, Deauville—once they start to drink and gamble they never stop. I had never seen Volstock drunk, but I had seen him gamble after he had drunk enough cana to paralyze the faculties of three men. Yet with it all he was a good cattleman, one of the best at the Tora, and for that reason his occasional absences of two or three days were condoned. Every one knew where he was at these times, but few would have cared to go to fetch him. Even Gomez let him choose his own time to leave the pulpería.

Volstock was riding the bay horse he had matched against Miguel's chestnut. He made the animal secure and came over to us. Weeks of exposure to the sun had darkened his skin almost to the color of Miguel's; his eyes were a remarkable pale blue china color; they might have been a woman's; his close-cropped hair was fair as yellow sand. He wore no silk handkerchief round his throat, his rebenque, unornamented, swung from his wrist, a plain-handled, long steel knife was thrust through his belt; in fact he had nowhere about him any of the finery that the peons love to display when their week's work is over. Only his bearing remained to him, the bearing that never deserts a man who has been used to authority over men.

He greeted Donato, Miguel and myself, and called to Gomez to bring him some cana. Gomez filled a wineglass, holding at least a quarter of a pint, with the spirit, and set it beside Volstock together with a glass of water.

Volstock looked across at Leonita.

"*Salud!*" He raised the glass to his lips.

"You drink alone?" asked Miguel, for it is a breach of manners in the camp for the last comer to order refreshments by himself.

Volstock took the tumbler of water that is always served with cana and threw the contents on the ground.

"The dogs may join me," he answered, watching the water collect in a puddle near the nose of a mongrel greyhound belonging to Gomez.

I listened not without relish; in the camp or indeed in any part of Argentina, to be rude openly is considered boorish; but the subtle insult has been brought to a fine art.

Miguel looked across at Volstock's bay horse. He did not say anything, but the expression upon his face was infinitely more insulting than mere words.

Volstock stretched his long legs; a faint twinkle of amusement lit his blue eyes. He waited, knowing that repartee cost Miguel considerable mental effort.

I do not know how long Miguel would have sat there waiting for inspiration, had not the music of a guitar floated out to us.

He got up and, making a palpable effort to appear in no hurry, walked toward the store. So there was to be a dance. Old Donato, who had seen the tango danced before it came down from the Indian camps to the great cities, got up. He dearly loved to listen to the haunting music and watch the sensuous, graceful movements of the dance.

Volstock and I were left alone.

"Señor, will you do me the favor of looking after this little trifle while I dance?"

I agreed, though certain there was something beneath the request, for the package, however valuable, would be perfectly safe in Volstock's belt, unless of course he got drunk, which I had never seen him succeed in doing.

"Thank you, señor—you are coming to see the races tomorrow?"

I told him that I was, and murmured some conventional wishes for his success.

AFTER he had gone I looked at the package. It was about two inches long by one inch deep, wrapped in a piece of notepaper, grown rather grimy, and secured by a blue seal.

Presently I got up to watch the dancing. There were some half-dozen couples on the floor. The men in their *chirapas*, belts, and shirts open at the neck, without weapons, of course. Gomez took care to see that they complied with the law of the land, and handed their knives and guns over the counter as they entered his store. The girls in homemade holland or cotton frocks many with bright-colored handkerchiefs round their throats presented to them by their admirers.

Volstock was not dancing. He leaned against the wall, his hands thrust deep in the pockets of his baggy trousers. Leonita danced with Miguel. Miguel's face wore an expression of triumph. He had his arm round Leonita and held her head close-pressed to his shoulder, and could not see her eyes. Had he noticed how often they strayed to the corner where Volstock stood, and how at other times a far-away look came into their dark depths, he would have felt less satisfied.

I rather wondered all the same, for two or three tunes were played without Volstock making any effort to get Leonita to dance with him. Then things explained themselves. Volstock left his corner and crossed the floor, or rather I should say tried to cross it, and failed completely. He was as completely drunk as a man could be.

"We will drink, *che*," he said, leaning heavily on my shoulder, and lurching toward the bar.

Gomez pulled down a bottle containing a concoction scarcely fit for pickling snakes, but bearing the label "Cana" in letters large enough for the most drunken man to see, and filled two glasses.

"And you will drink, too," said Volstock, eyeing him.

"Thank you." Gomez took down another bottle in which he kept the real cana.

"No, from this bottle. It is more sociable; I insist." Volstock pushed forward the bottle from which Gomez had helped us.

Gomez hesitated, then took the proffered bottle.

"*Salud* and no regrets." Volstock emptied his glass. "No regrets, señor," he repeated as Gomez set his glass down after only taking a sip.

Reluctantly the proprietor drank his own poison, and as I saw the smarting tears come to his eyes I could have laughed aloud.

"And now, señor, to business. What price do you lay against the bay?"

"What stake do you wish to make?" asked Gomez, alert and businesslike at once.

"As much as you will take. A thousand head of cattle if you like?" Volstock's elbow slipped from the counter, but I caught him before he fell.

Gomez looked at me and shrugged his shoulders. What could one do with a man as drunk as that?

"Your cattle are close by?" he inquired, now beginning to doubt if Volstock would be able to pay for the drinks he had had that night.

"The cattle, no; but their value, yes. The packet, *che*." Volstock turned to me.

I handed the little grimy package over. Volstock fumbled with it, dropped it a couple of times, and handed it back to me to open.

I took off the outer covering and found some tissue paper, undid the tissue paper and came to cotton wool. I could feel now between finger and thumb something round and hard with sharp edges.

"Put it there under the light." Volstock tapped the counter. He tweaked the cotton wool away.

Gomez gave an exclamation. There, glistening like a cat's eyes in the darkness, radiating the color of the rainbow, lay a diamond in circumference about the size of a sixpenny piece.

"It is the last of some little trinkets I brought away with me from Russia," said Volstock, holding out the diamond in his palm.

Gomez took it gingerly in his fingers and scratched the bottle of cana.

"Be careful! It cuts." Volstock laughed. "And you may spill some of that valuable 'liqueur.' "

Gomez saw at once that the stone was genuine. His brain worked fast. The man was drunk, and Providence had sent him in his way. He handed back the stone and waited for Volstock to speak.

"Well?" inquired Volstock. "Your price?"

"For the stone?"

"No, against my horse."

"Two to one."

"Say twenty thousand dollars against the diamond?"

Gomez took the diamond again; his hand trembled. The stake was more than half his savings. Yet short of a miracle he must win. That weedy bay horse could never beat Miguel's chestnut. Every one regarded the race as a farce. Only Donato affected to have doubts; and Donato was getting old and no longer the judge of matters that he used to be. The diamond alone was worth twenty thousand dollars in Buenos Aires.

"All right," Gomez nodded. "I will put the stone in my safe."

Volstock shook his head. "My friend here will keep it, and he will keep, too, a little record of our conversation; you have ink and paper?"

As I attested the strange document I noticed the two signatures. Gomez's handwriting was shaky, Volstock's firm and clear. I had been wrong then, after all, in thinking Volstock drunk.

THE race took place at two P.M. the following day on a stretch of ground belonging to Gomez behind the pulpería.

I can see the scene vividly today.

The crowd all collected around the starting point, for in "camp" races the start is the principal excitement. They lined out as along a football ground, the supporters of Miguel on one side and the supporters of Volstock on the other.

The day before, Volstock had had no supporters at all, but in the curious way in which racing intelligence leaks out all the world over, news had got about that at the last minute the mad Russian had taken a tremendous bet about himself. Where he had got the money from no one knew; it was only known that the sum he stood to win was bigger than had ever been raced for in the "camp" before. This was one of the reasons why supporters rallied to Volstock. Another and a far more influential reason was the attitude taken by Donato.

The old gaucho rode out to the course in all his finery. He had put on for the occasion a pair of spurs the like of which I have never seen. They looked to me the size of soup plates, and were cut in the pattern of a starfish with points alone a full two inches long. Many eyes watched to see where he would place himself. First he made a careful examination of the horses, looking long and closely at Miguel's mount; then he chatted for a few minutes with Volstock; finally he took up his place on Volstock's side.

"Donato thinks the bay will win!" the young peons murmured to one another.

I could well understand their surprise, for there was really no comparison between the two horses seen side by side. Miguel's chestnut was a beautiful little creature, proud-stepping, moving with the lightness of a leopard; Volstock's bay was a far coarser animal, too short and too heavily barreled for my liking.

However, there was one factor for which full allowance had to be made. That was the peculiar conditions which governed the race.

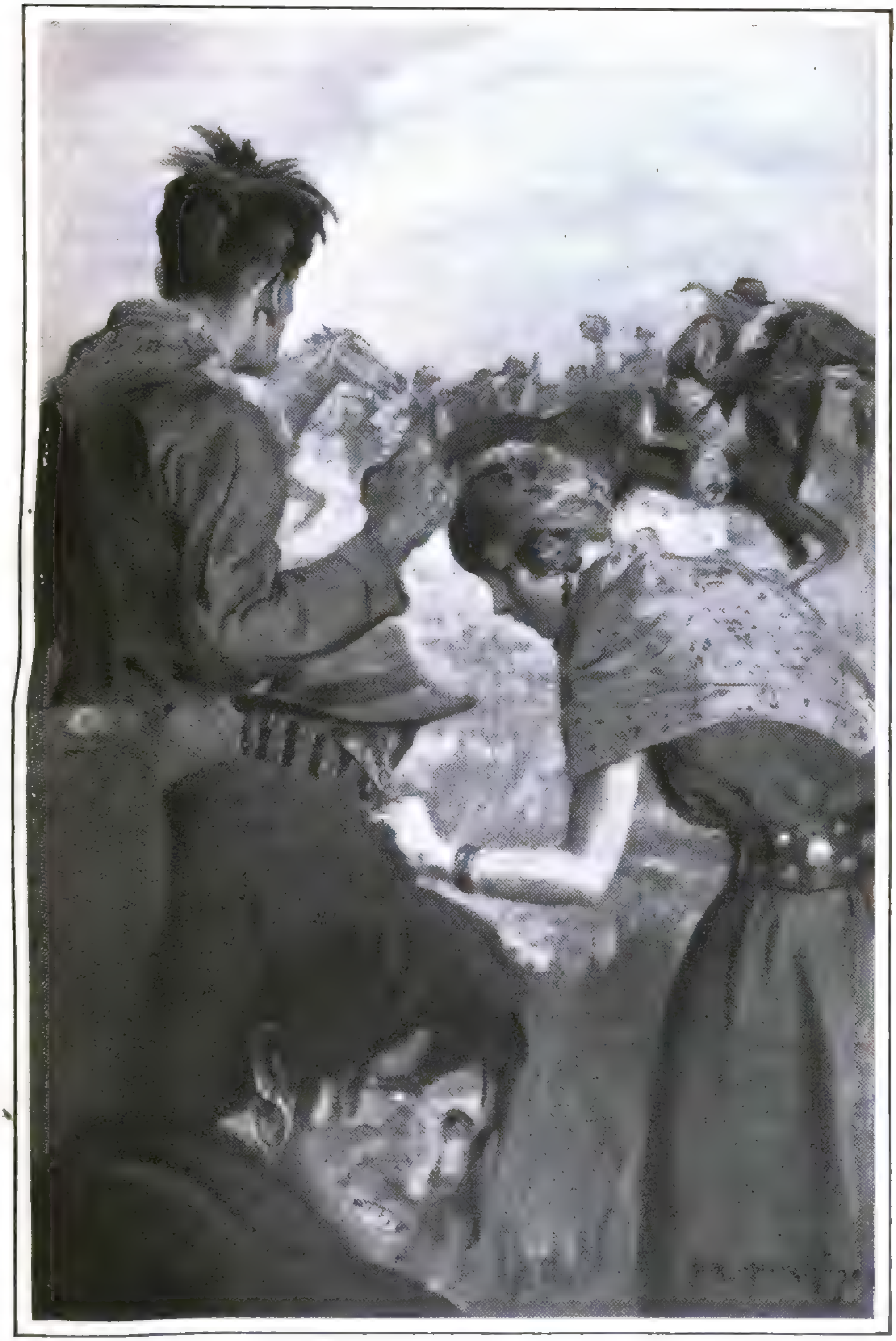
In "camp" races there is no official starter. The riders start themselves. They do so by mutual arrangement, going back to a distance behind the post and coming forward at a gallop. As they near the starting point one rider calls to the other:

"*Vamos?*" (Shall we go?)

The other, if he is satisfied he is on equal terms, answers:

"*Sí.*" (Yes.)

If he is not satisfied he shakes his head



Miguel must be mad to start a length and a half behind. But a loud cry followed. Volstock's bridle, on the side nearer to Miguel, had come undone!

and the competitors pull up, wheel back, and begin all over again.

In a short race of six furlongs to steal half a length by clever jockeying at the post may mean the difference between victory and defeat, and this is what each horseman strives his utmost to do. In the old days peons would spend the greater part of a day trying to get the better of each other in this way. But latterly the custom has grown of putting a limit to the time in which the men must get started or the race is declared void. Miguel and Volstock were to be allowed half an hour.

From the beginning it was plain Volstock wanted to play out this half-hour to the limit, and Miguel to get away without delay. The reason for this was evident. The chestnut was a high-couraged, temperamental animal, the bay as placid as a cow.

After half a dozen false starts the chestnut was beginning to sweat, and Volstock's horse had not turned a hair.

Miguel did not dare ride his horse easily, as any moment his challenge might be accepted and he would have to go whether ready or not.

VOLSTOCK, on the other hand, seemed to have an uncanny means of communicating his real intentions to the bay. Time and again he came galloping down to the post as hard as he could, and Miguel, believing he was satisfied with his position at last and really meant to go, would call "*Vamos?*" But each time Volstock shook his head, and the bay on passing the post would pull up and turn round of his own initiative like a well schooled polo pony after the ball has been hit back down the field. Meanwhile the chestnut, excited to frenzy, had galloped a quarter of the way down the course before Miguel could pull him up.

On either side the line of peons watched critically, now and again shouting advice to their selected man.

Opposite I saw Gomez, drops of perspiration on his forehead, watching the horse that carried his money being gradually worn down by the cunning of Volstock.

Beside me stood Leonita, her little round face rather white; her great dark eyes never leaving Volstock's face.

I noticed the blue silk handkerchief she had worn the night before was now round Volstock's neck.

Every one knew that the half-hour was nearly up, and that the riders must start in the next two or three attempts.

They were coming down now to the post, and obviously it would be no start, for Volstock was leading by nearly a length and a half. He turned his head and called back to Miguel:

"*Vamos!*"

"*Sí!*"

A great cry went up from Miguel's supporters. He must be mad to start like that a length and a half behind.

But another, louder cry followed. Donato, Leonita and I saw in the same moment what had happened. Volstock's bridle, on the side nearer to Miguel, had come undone!

Miguel had seen it, and that was why he had called "*Sí,*" although so far behind. Volstock too had seen it, for he was fumbling with the bridle, but the challenge had now been given and accepted; the men must race.

Then we saw another thing. Volstock leaned far forward in the saddle, and with a flick so quick one could scarcely see it, knocked the broken bridle from his horse's head.

I have seen men finish without a stirrup; I have heard of men holding a slipped saddle on behind; but to ride and win a six-furlong race with no bridle, that frankly I should have said was a tale only told to the marines.

But Volstock did it. Right under our very eyes. He held a tuft of mane and guided the bay with his whip. He had, it must be remembered, more than a length's start, and the chestnut's energies were considerably worn down.

IN THE hush that followed before the uproar I heard a quiet chuckle. Looking round I saw Donato at my elbow.

It was an old trick, Donato explained to me, played in the days when the Indians rode their horses bareback. He thought all had forgotten it, till the other evening he came on Volstock practicing alone.

"The horse of course knew," he concluded. "That was why, until he felt the bridle loosened, he made no exertion and did not tire himself like the other."

Another adventure of the world tramp in Argentina—coming, in October EVERYBODY'S.

And David *Took Thence* a Stone

The Goliath of the Shipping World Thought He Could Crush the Upstart Who Wished to Be His Son-in-Law; but the Upstart Had a Different Opinion

By Norman Reilly Raine

Illustration by H. Weston Taylor

YOUNG Mr. Oliver Johns leaned back in his office chair and raised his rather prominent blue eyes ecstatically toward the ceiling. "Gosh!—eh? Gosh!—eh?" he asked himself, and became lost for a minute in roseate dreams. Then he hoisted himself to his feet and performed a few very creditable movements of a fox-trot, the full beauty thereof being marred, however, by the sudden entry of his office boy, a diminutive and righteous youth in spectacles.

"Your mail, sir," he announced, veiled reproof in his tone.

"Ah! Quite so. Thank you, Tipkin! Er—lovely day, Tipkin, eh?"

As the heavy rains of late March were, at the moment, lacing the window panes, and a blustering half-gale harried the pedestrians of St. James Street, below, to cover, the remark was not sufficiently accurate to obtain the assent of the veracious Tipkin. He shuffled a bit, if so decorous a soul could be said to shuffle, and said no word. On this day, however, nothing could damp the matutinal ardor of Mr. Johns.

"Do you smoke, Tipkin?"

"No, sir," said Tipkin firmly.

"Dance? Drink?"

The innocent boy shook a scandalized head.

"Perhaps you swear?"—hopefully.

"Oh, no, sir! Never!" replied Tipkin, deeply shocked.

"Ah, too bad! Too bad! I was about to suggest that you take a half-holiday, Tipkin, but I see that such a giddy procedure, Tipkin, would never do. However, there's a good fight on tonight at the Amateur Athletic. Here's a dollar, and—"

Tipkin, clutching the dollar, reproachfully withdrew. Whereupon his master, resuming his seat and swinging about to face the streaming window, cocked his feet upon the sill and hummed, from all of which one might gather that Mr. Johns was in high fettle. He was. He was happy; gloriously, wildly happy—for had he not, upon the previous evening, proposed and been accepted by the dearest, sweetest, most wonderful— But such rhapsodies are solely Mr. Johns's prerogative, now!

Shorn of its verbiage, the case stood thus; after eighteen months of unremitting devotion he was, at last, firmly and irrevocably engaged to Marion Winter, society beauty, and only daughter of old Sam Winter, the shipping king. True, old Sam was not, as yet, aware of the honor that had been thrust upon him, and, to do Mr. Johns justice, that gentleman was too modest not to know that the magnate might not regard him altogether in the light of an unmixed blessing. Still an interview would allay all doubt. Mr. Johns was a cheery young soul, and hoped for the best.

The telephone interrupted his musing, and for an hour thereafter he was busy. While he is so engrossed, we may gain closer knowledge of the outer man. He was of medium height, his stocky figure being saved from corpulence only by the amazing depth and breadth of his chest. His hair was prematurely thin, his face full and healthy with a small sandy mustache, a strong, short nose, a firm jaw and, his greatest charm, an ingenuous and disarming smile. He had a trick of gazing at one with his mild, protruding blue eyes in an innocent and bovine way that led folk to erroneous conclusions regarding his intelligence. His voice was mild—almost effeminate—yet, as Lieutenant Oliver Johns in the late European fracas, he had been known to his gratified and admiring platoon as "Bloody Mary." The death of his father in 1918 left him heir to a small but profitable shipping business known as the Redskin Line, composed of three rather ancient ocean-going steamers, the *Iroquois Brave*, the *Onondaga Brave* and the *Mohawk Brave*, all plying the jute trade between Calcutta, New York and Montreal.

Mr. Johns made a note on a scratch pad, pushed aside the correspondence on his desk and lit a cigarette. Again he tilted his chair back, his head in a maze of gauzy smoke, and, in the exuberance of his heart, was about to lift up his voice in song, when, without warning, the door flew open, admitting the formidable person of old Sam Winter.

Mr. Winter was heavy of jowl and purse, and keen of eye, and deep-versed in lore of men and ships. As head of a gigantic shipping corporation he had uncanny knowledge of freights and markets, and by his ruthlessness in crushing competition, made himself feared and hated in the business world of Montreal. Ordinarily calm and of few words, he seemed, this morning, to be fairly swelling with a suppressed something which the astute Mr. Johns unerringly diagnosed as wrath. Always the gentleman, however, he greeted his visitor with urbanity, not to say ingratiation, and offered him a chair.

OLD MAN WINTER sank into it and favored Mr. Johns with a long and hostile stare. An incoherent muttering arose to his grim lips.

"Beg pardon, sir?" said Mr. Johns politely.

The shipping baron made a visible effort at restraint, but, failing, reached forward and struck the desk with a bang that rattled the very bookcase in the corner.

"What the hell is this nonsense about Marion and you, Johns?" he demanded.

"Ah—yes—what, I wonder," said Mr. Johns vaguely.

"You—*you* wonder! You fat porpoise—sneaking like a snake in the grass into my house," said the Old Man not very lucidly, "and presuming to make up to my daughter! What d'ye mean by it, hey?"

"I expect you know, sir!" returned Mr. Johns placatingly.

"*Know?* Yes, by ginger! I do know! But let me tell you—it won't do! D'ye hear? It won't do! So you can dig that flea out of your lug for keeps, my man!"

"I'm sorry, sir. I hoped you would be pleased. I'm sure we will be very happy, Marion and I. At any rate, I intend to do my utmost. We'll be very glad to see you, I'm sure, when we're—*hmm!*—if—we're married." Mr. Johns's tone was mild, almost appealing. "I—I hope you won't forbid it. But if you do, then of course—"

The irate father was deceived. He had expected surrender, certainly, but after a bit of bluster from the young cub, first. Evidently he was too frightened to kick up much fuss. The fellow would listen to reason. A heroic effort brought his voice and temper under control once more. Mr. Johns observed it.

"Have a cigar, sir," he suggested eagerly, passing a humidor which the other ignored.

"Now listen to me, and get it straight, Johns," he rumbled, not unkindly. "I tell you flat, once and for all, for your own good; keep away from my girl. Your common sense should have told you that I'd never consent to such a damfool match!" Here his choler again threatened to overcome him at the mere thought of the other's presumption. "Marion won't go against my will. By the old hickory, she don't dare! And if there's any more monkey business from you—well—I'm an ugly man to cross, that's all. Get it out of your head, boy, if you know what's good for you—eh? What say?"

"Do you mind telling me, sir," said Mr. Johns meekly, "exactly your objections to me as a son-in-law?"

"It would take too long," the Old Man snorted, "but I'll tell you some of 'em. You know the style of living to which Marion is accustomed. What have you to stack up against that, hey?"

"Well—I'm not exactly a pauper, sir—"

"No. Not exactly—not yet, at least.

But by gum, if you begin to buck me—never mind that now, though! They say you're clever. Oh, yes, I've heard it—from men who should know better! Excuse me if I can't see it. Your father—a man I admired, if he *did* run foul of me once or twice—left you three ships—rust-bitten old tin pots, of course, but doing fairly well in a good trade which he established when you were a brat. What have you done since you got 'em, hey? Have you built up? Have you enlarged the business? Hey? Not by a damn sight! You've sat on your hunkers and let the business fall off! Against competition you'd snuff it in a month! I know shipping, don't forget!"

Here, in the blindness of his dislike, the Old Man did Mr. Johns something less than justice, for, in spite of after-war depression, the most bitter in the history of shipping, he had kept his vessels moving and earning a small profit, where older and more experienced companies had been forced to the wall. His only reply to his critic's diatribe, however, was an interested "Ah!" Winter continued.

"AS FOR Marion, love in a cottage won't do for that miss—not by a long chalk, and don't you forget it! Just settle her bills for a month, and see!" His chest expanded with grim pride. "I guess you see the light now. Here's my last word. I don't like to jump a young fellow just starting life, so to speak. You take your ring back, and we'll call it quits."

For the first time in the interview Mr. Johns showed lively interest.

"She—did she give it to you?" he asked uncertainly.

"Er—no-o"—with a touch of temper as of an unpleasant reminiscence. "Not exactly—but she will! She will! Well—you leave her alone, and I'll leave you alone. What d'ye say? Hey?"

Mr. Johns beamed. "No, sir," he answered happily.

"*Hey? What?*" bellowed the old man. "You won't? You refuse?"

"Yes, sir."

"Yes, sir? What the—"

"I mean, no, sir. I refuse."

Blind fury arose and choked the older man. His voice sank. Every word was laden with venom.

"You young fool! D'ye think you can fight old Sam Winter with your damned old fair-weather traps—hey?"

"Yes, sir," Mr. Johns opined modestly.

There was white-hot silence for a moment, then:

"You really intend to carry on with this—to defy *me?*"

"I hope you'll come around in time, sir."

"*Never*, by Gad, sir! *Never!* Take your choice, you young ass! Stack up against me and I'll show you no quarter! I'll wipe your miserable stink-pots off the ocean, so help me! I'll ruin you, Johns! I'll crush you flatter'n a cockroach, by Gad!"

"A cockroach, sir," pointed out Mr. Johns amiably, "is a fairly lively lad to put your foot on. Of course, Marion and I"—his voice lost none of its mildness—"would prefer to have your bless—your approval, but it's really not essential. We expect to be very happy. Sure you won't reconsider, sir? Take your own time, of course," he ended kindly.

Passion, and a shrewd suspicion that the younger man had outplayed him, drove the old gentleman from his chair.

"We'll see!" he shouted. "I give you warning, you young sprout! Sam Winter's after your scalp, and by the hookey he'll have it!" Purple of face, he moved toward the door.

"Your hat, sir," Mr. Johns reminded him.

He retrieved it.

"Your gloves, sir."

They were snatched.

"And—er—"

"*Hey?*"

"Your umbrella, sir," suggested Mr. Johns politely.

"Go to the devil!" the Old Man roared.

The door slammed.

"What a lovable child he must have been!" Mr. Johns ruminated.

He again leaned back in his chair, faced the storm-drenched street and whistled softly through his teeth. Just so had Bloody Mary whistled, in the years gone by, in the cold, wet dawn of a zero hour.

ON A fine, sun-flooded afternoon, three months later, when the whole green world had drunk deep of the flowing sap and the leaves of the chestnuts still held their vivid crispness, Mr. Oliver Johns sat at his desk. A vagrant sprite of a breeze, despairing of carrying her fragrance the length of the dingy street, slipped through the open window and gently stirred the placid tendrils of Mr. Johns's scant coiffure, distilling perfume of gardens and fields, the while. But the thoughts of that ordinarily cheerful young man were miles—nay, leagues—away from vain flirtation with summer's idling couriers. They were centered on a ramshackle, sun-baked, salt-rimed cargo steamer alongside the Kidderpur docks in far-away Calcutta, beneath the cloudless, breathless blue of an Indian sky—a steamer with silent winches and an empty hold, and bearing upon her heat-blistered funnel the feathered likeness of a North American warrior head, and upon her battered counter the words, "Onondaga Brave, Montreal." Near by he saw, with imagination's telescope, a fine, clean, modern twelve-knot ship, with the large white "W" of the Winter Line upon her green funnel, her cargo booms lifting and dipping ceaselessly as they transferred great bales of jute into the fast-filling holds.

Young Mr. Johns essayed a whistle which, somehow, trailed off into a sigh, as his eyes dropped to the cablegram which he held in his hand. He fumbled for a match, lit a cigarette and perused the typed form for the sixth time. It read:

> Redskin—Montreal. Winter agent undercut freight below our lowest authorized figure no cargo here awaiting instructions
>
> C. W. Allen Master

For a moment after he read, the muscles at the corners of Mr. Johns's firm jaw bulged. Then he grinned, the light of battle in his prominent blue eyes, and brought his feet from the desk to the floor with a bang. During the next half-hour he was busy with telephone, wire and cable. When he left the office he drove to the golf links, where he beat his previous best by three, for his lively fancy was pleased to assume that the round white ball with which his swinging club connected was the round, white pate of old Sam Winter. He felt much better when he returned to town for dinner.

THE next morning he found on his desk a sheaf of return messages, fruit of his activity of the afternoon before. Principal, and more satisfactory among them, were one from Saigon, in French Indo-China, and another from Cuba. He read them through, considered for a moment, pressed the key for a telegraph messenger and buzzed for his stenographer.

"Take a cable, Miss Cranston," he directed, and dictated:

> Allen S.S. *Onondaga Brave* care Welker & Sons Co. Ltd. Calcutta. Proceed Saigon load rice for Havana discharge load sugar for Montreal
>
> Johns

This was the happiest day's work that had fallen to Mr. Johns in many moons, for by the merest fluke he had secured cargoes, out of the heavy season in both places, and, at the same time, relieved Winter's crowd of a neat slice of their pet trade.

"That'll make up a bit for past favors!" he chirped. And yet, in spite of his luck, a slight depression settled upon him; for it *was* luck—that was the rub—not cleverness, not business acumen, just plain, doggone luck; and, being the peculiar young gentleman that Providence had made him, Oliver Johns was not content to beat Old Man Winter on that basis. Lick him with his own weapons—shipping genius—that was the stunt!

Old Man Winter was making himself felt. He was beginning to hurt, and to hurt badly. The *Onondaga Brave* was the second of young Mr. Johns's ships to be underbid on its cargo in Calcutta, a Winter boat having cut out the *Mohawk Brave* within a month of his memorable tiff with the father of his adored. Winter's policy now was clearly defined. He had diverted certain of his ships to the job of crushing the Redskin Line. Whenever a Redskin vessel en ered Calcutta, a big white "W" was its neighbor, and although Welker & Sons Co., Ltd., Johns's agents, bid almost to the minimum of profit, the others' agents dug below them. Obviously the shipping king was out to obliterate the Redskins and incidentally, to collar the highly profitable North American jute trade even though, at first, he had to carry the stuff at a dead loss. The building up of the business had been the life work of Johns, Senior, and to see it slipping into hostile hands was a knife-blade in the debonair heart of his son. Still, such a cutthroat game could have but one conclusion. The smaller man could not hope to survive against the millions under the control of the Winter Syndicate unless—

FOR the remainder of the day Mr. Johns remained in his office, inaccessible alike to callers and to staff. Cigarette after cigarette he consumed, groping, in the thickness of the smoke cloud and the innermost crannies of his brain, for a feasible weapon of defense. The afternoon wore on, and the long summer twilight deepened into a night of singular beauty. But he had no eyes for Nature's artistry. Sheet after sheet he covered with figures, and calculated schemes, which followed each other in rapid succession to the waste-paper tin. When it became too dark to see he switched on the lights, and collarless and in shirt sleeves, wrestled with his problem. Then, suddenly, a strange, wild exhilaration flamed within him, and, resurrecting a satisfactory expression or two from the long disused vocabulary of Bloody Mary, he used them with soul-slaking delight—for he had it! He had stormed his objective, and captured his idea!

Half stupid from fatigue, he glanced at his watch. A quarter past eight. He buttoned his collar, resumed his coat, and, sticking on his hat at a doggish angle, swaggered to the door. He essayed an airy skip or two on the way, but found that too strenuous for his cramped muscles. He went into the outer office, then, about to leave, stopped abruptly, and made toward a solitary light which gleamed in a far corner. Slumped over his desk, his pale, pinched features resting on his arm and indulging, now and then, in a chaste snore, was Tipkin. His employer touched him on the shoulder. He jumped to guilty wakefulness, his weak eyes blinking owlishly through their thick glasses.

"Hello!" said Mr. Johns facetiously. "Enjoying a night out, Tipkin?"

"No, sir," responded the youth, his natural propriety swimming rapidly to the surface. "I knew that you were staying late, sir, and I thought you wouldn't mind if I stayed, too—in case you required anything."

A feeling akin to admiration surcharged the tongue and breast of young Mr. Johns. It was something, to have inspired the loyalty of even such a one as Tipkin.

"Faithful Rover!" he murmured.

"Beg pardon, sir?"

"Nothing. I—er— Better cut along, now, and get some supper, and—er—Tipkin—think you can handle a clerk's job, eh?"

"Yes, sir, but—"

"Ah! Then tell Mr. Hyslop in the morning to find you a successor at the end of the week. But mind," he added severely, "you don't get drunk on your raise!"

"Oh, no, sir!" exclaimed the noble lad, horrified at the bare suggestion.

Mr. Johns walked to the elevator, whistling.

He drove home, had dinner, packed a bag and took the midnight train to New York, where he spent a busy three days, going from there to Philadelphia, where for thirty-six hours his cheerful countenance embellished the marts of trade. His next stop was Toronto, where he put in a day; then, tired, but deeply satisfied in the consciousness of a good piece of work well done, he returned to Montreal, and, for the first time in weeks, enjoyed an unbroken sleep.

WHEN, the following day, Mr. Johns telephoned Marion Winter, she, her quick intuition sharpened by love, recognized immediately a note in his voice that had been long absent—a note of suppressed jubilation, almost of triumph; and that same mysterious intuition told her that for two pins, or even half that amount, young Mr. Johns was quite prepared to carry her off in complete defiance of fathers and the whole Book of Canons, if need be. Yet his words held none of that glowing ardor; rather the reverse, for what he said was:

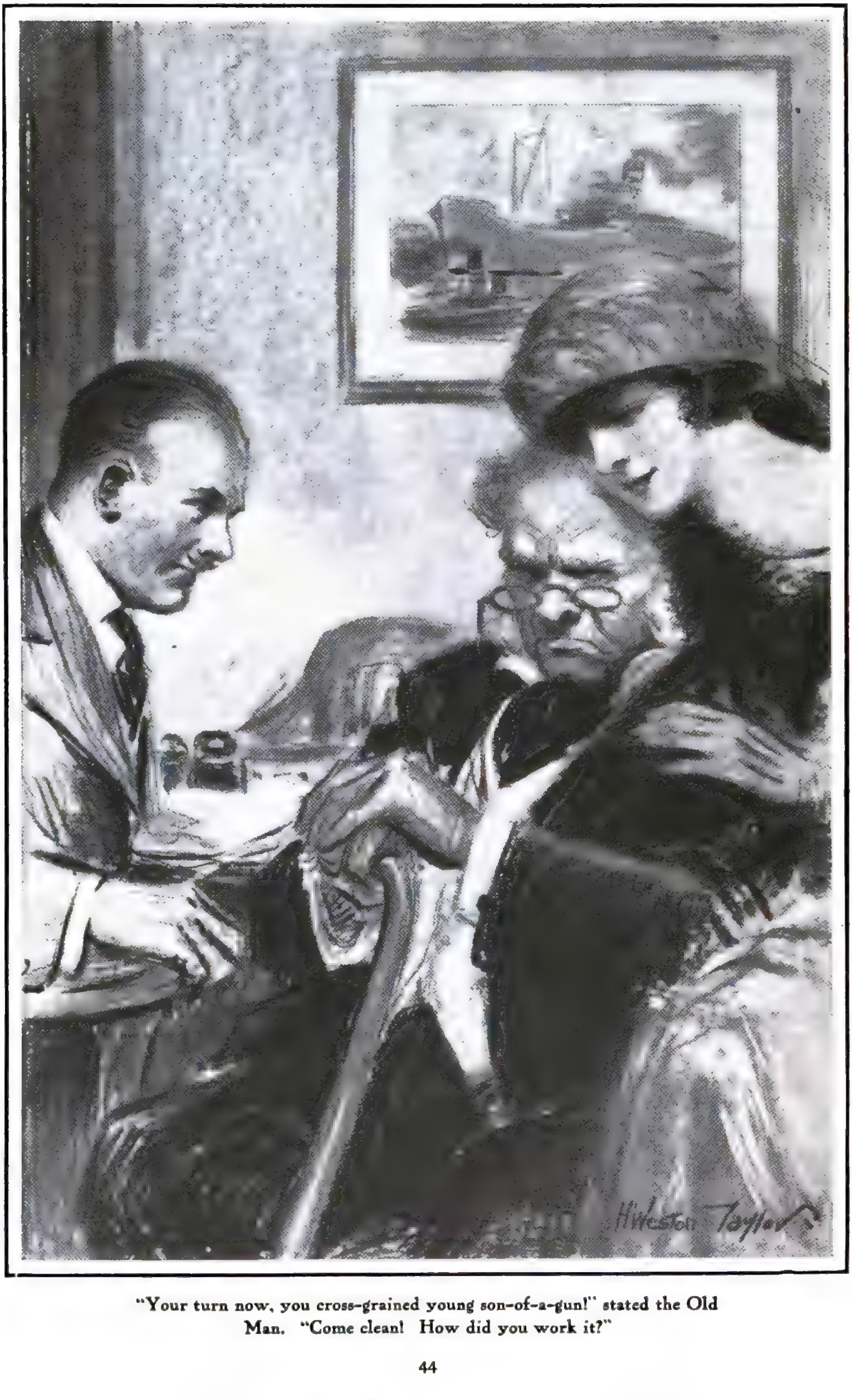
"Can you wait for a few months longer, dearest?"

"For as long as you like, Oliver." Then she added, womanlike, "But not for *too* long, dear." Yet with this equivocal reply he seemed quite content.

"That's fine!" he responded enthusiastically. "Because—er—well, the scenes are lightening daily. You know—the last shall be first—the meek shall inherit the earth—although, to tell the truth I don't feel particularly meek right now! Come into town for lunch with me and I'll spill the works, eh?"

Now, among other qualities, good and bad, with which young Mr. Johns had been endowed by his parents was a liberal portion of stubborn pride—a pride which, despite his longing, would not allow him to marry Marion against her father's will, until he had proved to that old rhinoceros that he could hold up his end against him in the Old Man's chosen field.

Everybody's Magazine, September, 1924


H Weston Taylor

"Your turn now, you cross-grained young son-of-a-gun!" stated the Old Man. "Come clean! How did you work it?"

SOME weeks later, in response to urgent and anguished queries, Messrs. Welker & Sons Co., Ltd., Calcutta, received instructions which confirmed them in an opinion long entertained, that young Mr. Johns was completely, incurably mad. They realized—far better, it seemed, than that rash young gentleman—the hopelessness of his fight, with the tremendous odds against him. Cargo after cargo had been secured by the big white "W" at rates with which it was folly to compete, for with the low overhead and tremendous buying power of the Winter Corporation as opposed to the inevitably higher operating costs of a small business, old Sam Winter's agents bid for and carried the jute at a price which, while it left a margin of profit to the big concern, would have meant heavy loss to the Redskin Line.

Welker Senior's admiration for the son of his old client, which had risen high after the war because of the way he had handled his ships, dissolved, in the futility of his present reckless course. There were other trades into which the Redskin Line could break; not so profitable nor so certain as the business which now was lost to it, but good enough at least to pay expenses and a little more, and certainly to stave off ruin. In his genuine interest in young Mr. Johns he repeatedly had suggested this course, even though it meant the loss of a client. In reply he had received the following:

> **Continue present policy force W to lowest possible rate but don't underbid. JOHNS**

"Futile young idiot!" snapped Mr. Welker as he tossed the paper to his son. "How's that for the acme of lunacy? How long does he think he can keep this up? The North American jute people aren't asleep—not by a damn sight! They'll take advantage of this blasted rate war and call for prices on a time charter. When that happens, Johns can chuck his hand in—and I'm dashed if he doesn't deserve all he gets. Here's the *Iroquois Brave* due in two days, and no chance of a cargo, yet he sends her, to save face with the Winter lot, by Jove! Thank God it's *his* money, not mine, he's throwing away!"

The incomprehensible tactics of young Mr. Johns were the cause of considerable interest and a vast amount of criticism among his Montreal contemporaries. The outcome of the fight was foregone, of course, but the majority of the independent shipping men, with whom he was popular, tempered the frankness of their opinions with compassion. But the intrepid Johns kept on his course, smiling and outwardly unperturbed.

Came a day when old Sam Winter, comfortably ensconced in the battered depths of his old leather chair, so out of keeping with the expensive furnishings of his private office, with its polished woodwork and priceless blue Manchurian carpet, put down his morning paper, lay back, and laughed. It was not a free, joyous, ringing laugh such as would have become the cold and sunny day, but rather a series of hoarse staccato chuckles, not at all musical, yet the best to be expected of one so out of practise.

"Got 'im! By ginger!" he chortled. "Now we're making the young devil squeak! Heh—heh—heh! By Gad!"

HE PICKED up his paper, folded it, read again the item which had excited his mirth, then summoned his general manager, Mr. Blake. When the latter entered the Old Man was turning over the pages of Lloyd's Register. He paused, with his finger marking a place.

"Seen the papers this morning, Joe?" he questioned.

"What particularly?" asked the other, puzzled.

The Old Man pointed out a paragraph in the shipping-column.

"The *Iroquois Brave* is up for sale," he said with a grim smile. "That's an uppercut for our ambitious young champion, eh? Saw him in the street yesterday. Thought he didn't look so damn' cocky as he's been doing, lately. It's costing us something, but by ginger, we'll punch his meal ticket for him!"

The other thought for a minute, tiny lines in the corners of his not unkindly eyes.

"Don't you think you're a bit too hard on the lad, Sam?" he asked slowly. "It seems—well—rather a pity in a way. The beggar is plucky, after all. He's been taking his medicine like a man, and—"

"Plucky! Gol-darn obstinacy — that's what I call it! Think of it! No more chance than a feather in hell, begad, yet he hangs on for sheer spite! But I'll scotch him if it takes half I've got! Marion's nearly as bad! Can't get him out of her silly young head! Flaunts his confounded ring before my very eyes, if you please, and swears she'll marry him if he's poor as Lazarus! Well, she'll have her chance if he tries to hang out much longer. This thing this morning gives me another shot at him. But I'll hit his pride this time as well as his pocket!" The Old Man continued his perusal of the Register.

"What's the idea?" asked Blake.

"I'm going to buy his bundle of tin cans and scrap iron and sail her down the river for a cargo of Indian jute with the big white 'W' on her funnel and 'Iroquois Brave' on her stern! That's the idea!" said Winter savagely. And, buying through an agent, that is exactly what he did.

The viciousness and petty spite of this move aroused the general indignation of shipping men. It was not playing the game. It savored too much of kicking a man when he was down. But young Mr. Johns bore the humiliation well. He was besieged with sympathy and more than one offer of disinterested financial help. But, although faint new lines appeared in his good-humored face, and his lips were rather tight, he shed sympathy and declined assistance. It was his scrap and he'd fight it out alone.

HIS MOST bitter critic as well as his stanchest friend was Gren Deacon, a prominent young grain man, and former fellow-officer in Johns's battalion.

"You're a pot-bellied numskull, Mary my lad," he announced coolly on the day when the *Iroquois Brave*, her ancient plates spotted with red lead as if blushing for very shame, surged downstream under the enemy flag. "You've put up a good fight, and no one would blame you for chucking it now. You haven't a chance of winning out; you won't accept help; you won't listen to advice, and you *will* play into Winter's hands. The old devil's out for guts, and he'll have 'em if you don't take cover; yet all you do is sit tight, grin all over your fat head and take the gaff, instead of retiring with honor and playing safe for the future. You're mad, man! You're crazy! You're off your nut!"

"Have a cigarette, old worm," said young Mr. Johns.

His visitor arose in helpless wrath.

"I'm going out to pick you a nice, kind keeper," he snorted.

Mr. Johns fixed his prominent blue eyes vacantly upon him.

"Go in the corner and wash your ears," he said. "I want to whisper something."

Mr. Deacon regarded him suspiciously.

"What is it?" he asked, drawing near, whereupon Mr. Johns entertained his friend's auricular appendage with several moments of low-pitched dialogue; and, as he proceeded, Mr. Deacon's not unhandsome countenance underwent a series of ludicrous changes, terminating in a broad grin and a tendency to whoop. But Mr. Johns restrained him.

"Not yet," he said. "I'm not dead sure of my ground. It seems to be working, but it depends on how far he will go to stamp me out. My game is to keep his temper up. Marion helps by flashing the ring, now and then. Now, if you'll do your little bit, then, I believe, between us, that we can pull it off."

"Bet your granny's nightie, I will!" swore the indelicate Mr. Deacon, and calling his friend several coarse, admiring names, he departed jubilant.

This may explain why, a few nights later, there was a convivial gathering of young bloods in the café of an expensive apartment hotel wherein Samuel Winter and his daughter were living. At a table adjacent to the merry party, which was headed by Mr. Deacon, sat Old Man Winter, alone. At the momentary gusts of hilarity that floated across to him, he frowned, and fixed the offenders with an indignant eye. Suddenly his grim old mouth was compressed with anger and the dull blood surged into his downy old ears as, during a lull, the voice of Mr. Deacon arose, clear as a bell, then, cautioned by a discreet companion, fell to a buzz, which was followed by a gale of laughter heartier than any before. The shipping magnate strode across to the party and glared at the culprit. Then he thundered forth:

"Johns told you he could lick old Sam Winter with a rowboat, and forks for oars, hey?" he bellowed. "Said for every dollar I took from his hand I put two in his pocket, did he? The insolent young jackass! You tell him from me, mister, that I'll flatten him lower'n a snake's keel—and when he's down and out I'll send my lawyers to pick his bones! Now you *tell* him that, young feller, d'you hear!" Leaving the astounded group, he stamped from the room.

Next morning the gratified tones of Mr. Deacon floated across the wire to his friend.

"It worked great!" he announced. "He frothed at the mouth and threw seven fits. What's the next move?"

"Nothing, thanks," said Mr. Johns. "We'll let Nature take her course."

IN MID-NOVEMBER, Welker, in Calcutta, received a cablegram from young Mr. Johns.

> *Mohawk Brave* en route secure full jute cargo undercut W any cost.

Mr. Welker was too profoundly disgusted for words, but his eloquent hands denoted hopelessness, desolation and contempt. However, when the *Mohawk Brave* arrived he did as he was bid. For the first time, then, in nine months, a Redskin Line ship sailed from Calcutta with a full cargo below hatches and a heavy deficit on the shoulders of her young owner.

The news was not without its effect upon the Winter Syndicate. The old man chewed savagely at his cigar, then conferred with Blake.

"It's a dying kick, Joe," he told the latter. "Just a final bluff before he cashes in. He's losing money on every cargo he gets, and just about two voyages more on that basis'll fry his onions for him. Anyway, we've got him where we want him. Look at this, from the North American Jute Importers, Limited, of New York and Philly. They want figures on a two-year-time charter. Here's their contract form, giving the terms of the charter. It's as good as ours, of course. Johns is a fool, but I don't believe even *he* will sew himself up for two years at the price to which we could force him down, hey?"

"We'll have to shave it pretty low ourselves at that rate, then," reminded Blake.

"Oh, that's all right. We can afford to take a small profit for a couple of years. Long before that, Johns will be through, and we'll have the business in our own hands, and at renewal time we can get our own price. I'll buy up his other two ships and keep 'em in the trade. Their names are well known out there and may help business. Got any suggestions, Joe? Hey? Oh, they want our figure by the twenty-fifth of the month. I'll go down myself and attend to it. I've got some business to look after there around that time, anyway."

At about eight-thirty on the night of November twenty-fourth, while old Sam Winter was speeding to New York, a small figure hurried along St. Catherine Street, Montreal. The bitterness of the air was extreme, the pavements were slippery underfoot, and two tears, forced by the cold, rolled from the eyes of the scurrying figure, while a dewdrop trembled, pendent, from the very tip of a glossy red nose, which peeped out above the top of a thick gray scarf like a holly berry over a wall. The sudden warmth of a telegraph office befogged his thick spectacles, whereupon he removed them, and unwound his woolen carf, revealing the benumbed and innocuous features of the steadfast Tipkin, trusted henchman and courier of young Mr. Johns.

Wiping his glasses, and replacing them on his diminutive nose, he seized a telegraph form and wrote thereon as neatly and rapidly as his frost-stiffened fingers would allow. When he had done he handed the message across the counter. The clerk glanced at it and shoved it back.

"You've forgotten the address," he said. "Here! I'll write it if your hands are numb."

"Thank you," said Tipkin, who had a heavy cold in the head. "Bister Sab Binter—no, S-a-eb—Sab, dubbedyou-I-ed-t-e-r—Binter, care North Americad Jute Importers, Limited, Dew York."

He paid the charges and departed once more into the frost-bound night.

On the following morning at about ten-thirty, old Sam Winter entered the offices of the North American Jute Importers, Ltd., on lower Broadway near the Battery. His card gave him immediate admittance into the room of the general manager, Chappell, who was somewhat inclined to corpulence, but whose keen brown eyes, humorous mouth and smooth skin made him appear younger than he was.

He received his visitor courteously, even cordially, and waved him to a seat. Cigars were lighted and they proceeded to business. Old Sam noted, appreciatively, that it did not take the other long to get to the nub.

"I propose," said the jute man, "to acquire ships under two-year charters for this trade. Here is the original contract covering the terms of the charters. I sent you a copy, so I suppose you are now familiar with the conditions. We will run the ships between jute seasons as well. What's your proposition, Mr. Winter?"

The Old Man named his figure. The other shook his head.

"I will be frank with you," he said, "in telling you that your only competitor is the Redskin Line, with which we have done business for years. I know of the rivalry between you, of course, and I tell you, flat, I'm out to take advantage of it. This I will say, though, that although we've had dealings of long standing with the other company, Mr. Johns is young, and—er—well, we prefer a change. Still, of course, if you are not prepared to meet his figure we have no option but to award him the contract. There is the Redskin Line offer."

He handed the Old Man a letter bearing the hated crest of his rival, and, as Winter read, his heavy countenance flushed to a deeper hue.

"THE man's mad, Chappell! Why, damn it, it's equivalent to carrying it free! The thing's a farce! He couldn't run one ship two voyages on those terms! It's childish to entertain a bid like that!"

Chappell shrugged. "Childish or no," he countered, "it's an offer, and if he fails—well, we are protected, anyway, under the contract. As for being unable to carry it out—I'm not so sure of that! I hear he's got some one back of him—just a rumor, of course, but I'm inclined to give it credence, because—well, plainly, no one would be fool enough to make such an offer without heavy support. Oh, I don't mind admitting that his figure is ridiculous, but it suits us. The rest is his funeral."

For several minutes the shipping magnate sat in furious reflection. He was seething inwardly, for he knew that he could not touch his enemy's figure without losses that he did not like to contemplate. Surely there was some other way in which he could block his game.

"Will you give me a few hours to think it over?" he asked, finally.

"Can't do it, Mr. Winter! We'd like to do business with you, but we must be fair to Johns—and I have to make my report to the Board of Directors at lunch today. Sorry!"

The Old Man attacked for forty-five minutes, with proposition and counterplan, but the jute man was immovable.

"Mind you," he told Winter at length, "the contract is for two years only, and then another will have to be made. Should you sign this you would be in a more favorable position at the time of renewal—but"—he looked at his watch—"it is now nearly a quarter of twelve. I have an appointment at noon, so—" He hesitated.

Bitter, vindictive passion swayed Old Man Winter. His face was apoplectic; his hands gripped the chair arms until his knuckles cracked. To suffer defeat at the hands of that young cub Johns, after all his boasting!—for if the Redskin Line got the charter it was defeat for the big white "W," even though the younger man went smash afterward—and then this talk of mysterious backing of Johns. There must be something in it; otherwise not even such an ass as Johns would venture on the game he was playing.

The Old Man remembered the other's invariable cheerfulness, and his habitually unworried mien, and well knew that such was not the attitude of a young business man facing financial ruin. He might keep it up for a while, but not for so long as Johns had done. No, there was something in it, he decided. A counter thought gripped him. What would his own partners say to sacrificing their interests to the satisfying of private grudges? Powerful as he was, he was not anxious to incur the concerted enmity of his business associates. No! He was up against it! His voice shaking with anger, he declined.

"I can't do it, Chappell, damn it!" he said savagely. "I've got to let the young devil have it!"

Chappell spread his hands. "I'm sorry, of course, but we can do nothing to help you, although— *Come in!*" he said as a tap on the door interrupted him.

His secretary entered, bearing a night lettergram.

"For Mr. Winter," he said.

Old Man Winter excused himself to Chappell and opened it. As he read, his face took on the fury of a demon incarnate. His eyes bulged, bloodshot, and his working features became a deep purple. He crushed the paper in his fist and sank back in his chair as though overcome. Alarmed at his appearance, Chappell went to him.

"What is it, Winter? Bad news? Anything I can do?"

"*Yes!*" the Old Man almost screamed. "Give me that damned contract! I'll sign it now and beggar him if it breaks me and every man in the Syndicate! Give it to me. *Quick!* D'ye hear, man!"

The other placed the paper before him and put a pen into the trembling hand. Winter signed—and with the action something seemed to leave him, and he looked suddenly old and worn. With difficulty he got to his feet, and, assisted by Chappell, mechanically put on his greatcoat and rubbers.

"I'll send my secretary down to look after the details," he said wearily, and left the office as one in a dream.

When he had gone, Chappell went to the window and looked out, through the lightly falling snow, at the harbor, with its faint outlines of moving vessels, sketched like an etching against the wintry distance, and, looking, a slow smile curved about the corners of his humorous lips. As he turned back to the room his eye caught the crumpled ball of the lettergram that had fallen from the Old Man's working fingers. He picked it up and pardonably, under the circumstances, read it. It said:

> Dear father Marion and I married today both send love and hope for your blessing.
>
> Son Oliver.

THINGS had indeed gone badly with the Redskin Line. In fact, that old and respected business was at an end. Every prediction of the most pessimistic of onlookers regarding the wreck of the concern had been fulfilled. The *Mohawk Brave* had been sold—to Old Man Winter, of course—and the *Onondaga Brave*, no longer sufficiently seaworthy to pass the requirements of Lloyd's, was to be scrapped for junk, or turned into a coal hulk. The firm's long connection with Welker of Calcutta was severed—a circumstance which seemed to afford considerable relief to that gentleman—and the proud warrior heads that for so long had traveled the wide sea spaces were known in their old haunts no more.

Yet, despite these crushing visitations of fortune, the rather prominent blue eyes of young Mr. Johns had lost none of their brightness, his tongue none of its indolent good humor, and his engaging smile none of its charm. Nor in any way did his material comforts seem to have suffered. His appearance gave none of the evidences of the ruined man. In fact, if anything, his blessings seemed to have increased. His office, augmented by an additional staff, was never so busy; the faithful Tipkin, his salary and position increased by additional honors and trust, flourished as never before, even to the extent, it was rumored, of venturing on a cigarette—only one, of course—in a spirit of unbridled deviltry, and young Mr. Johns's charming wife filled to brimming the chalice of his content.

Really, you know, it was hardly decent—certainly not orthodox—for one without a cent to his name to be able to hang on for so long in such a manner. Montreal society, looking daily for that verse-honored fringe on the cuffs of his well-cut pants, daily was disappointed. He attended his old clubs, drove his old car—and a new one, besides—and went his cheerful way with an outward prosperity truly astounding to those who knew that, by all the rules of life's game, as he was shipless, so should he be comparatively jobless, penniless and miserable. I say comparatively, because a young man with the proceeds of the sale of three steamers should, even after the settling of his colossal debts, still have something left wherewith to set up life anew.

And so Old Man Winter, unreconciled and bitter, seeing month by month the debits of his victory piling up against him—for he, personally, had assumed liability for all lossses in the affair of the jute contract; not that they even temporarily embarrassed the plutocratic old alligator—felt, somehow, that the fruits of his triumph were but as ashes between his expensive dental plates. Daily he found himself, much against his tough old will, longing more and more for the sound and touch of one who, even in her disobedience and determination to have her own way, was his all upon earth to a very lonely, cantankerous, formidable, forlorn old man.

Then, too, as the story of young Mr. Johns's unchanging fortune—unchanging, except, mayhap, for the better—came to his ears, and, in various ways he learned that his daughter lacked nothing of the refinements to which she had been accustomed since birth, he underwent a peculiar psychological change in respect to that gentleman—to this extent, that, although he would allow no word from others in his favor, and outwardly expressed his implacable enmity, yet he gratified his own half-sensed inclinations to the degree, sometimes, of desiring a little chat—on strictly impersonal terms, mind you—in order that he might come at the bottom of young Mr. Johns's secret. In extenuation, perhaps, of what some might have condemned as a most un-Sam-like weakening on his part, he told himself that, although many months had passed he had not yet crowed, as he had intended to crow, over his triumph of nearly a year before. But it was not until news of a most interesting coming event filtered to his ears through the medium of his housekeeper, Marion's old nurse, who visited her regularly and in defiance of the Old Man's orders, that he resolved at last to go to that unchastened young devil Johns, and extract his moment of supremacy.

So that Mr. Johns and charming young Mrs. Johns, who was lightening, by her presence, his weary round, his trivial task, were greatly surprised and not a little confounded when the door opened, and following close upon the heels of the protesting but unavailing Tipkin, old Sam Winter stepped into the room.

Now, somehow, firm as had been his resolve, and viciously as his stick had tapped the pavement on his way hither, the words of cutting sarcasm and lofty triumph with which, so cleverly, he had larded his caustic old tongue, were singularly hard to utter; and unaccountable, too, it was, that, as Marion went quickly to him, and laid a hand on his arm, and a soft arm about his withered neck, his old eyes got so dad-blamed blurred that he could hardly see through 'em—and strangest of all, perhaps, it somehow transpired, that the very fist with which he had firmly resolved to titivate the principal adornment of young Mr. Johns's countenance, in the event of any cheek from him, should now be so firmly and so cordially clasped within that young man's own. Bound he was, and delivered, guns, foot and horse, begad, into the camp of the Israelites—and yet his surrender seemed more precious, far, than any amount of glory.

But after a bit he recollected the explanation which he felt was due him, if for no other reason than that he had allowed them to make up to him again. So he brought his guns into action once more, and for all that they were charged with blank instead of earnest, they were none the less noisy.

"YOUR turn, now, you cross-grained young son-of-a-gun!" he stated half an hour later as, with his daughter perched on the arm of his chair, her slim fingers caressing his cheek, he faced young Mr. Johns across his desk. "Come clean! How did you work it? You put one over on me somehow, and I want to get at the bottom of it. Yes, confound you, we'll forget all about the other—although my pocketbook will remember it for some time to come! However, never mind that. Give me the details—your busy office—and so on!"

Mr. Johns showed a modest disinclination to reply, the reason for which soon became evident.

"Well, you see, sir—in a way, you're paying for it, do you see?" he began.

"No! I don't! But I'd like to, by hookey!" the Old Man grunted.

"You will, sir!" promised Mr. Johns cheerfully. "When you—er—decided to jump me, I had to think out a counter scheme. You had me stumped for a while, but I got it finally. When you cut prices in Calcutta I cut too, but generally, you may have noticed, you got away with the cargo, as I intended you should. You see, you had to become really *interested* in the thing, and to be really annoyed with me, if my plan was to develop at all. Do you follow me?"

The Old Man snorted. Mr. Johns warmed to his work.

"When you figured you had me strapped I sold the *Iroquois Brave*, which gave me some badly needed capital—capital I had to have in order to swing a deal I had put over in New York. When I got rid of the ship you thought I was retreating. I was simply retiring to a better line of defense, as we used to say in the good old days. My greatest worry at this time was that you might forgive me, for if you did I was dished. Even the sailing of the *Iroquois Brave* under the big white 'W' didn't bother me, for I knew that, although *you* owned her, she was still working for *me*."

At this point the Old Man had the grace to look uncomfortable. As young Mr.

Johns continued, his voice bore a shade of deprecation.

"In order to keep you thoroughly vexed with me—"

"In order to get me damn' good and mad, you mean!" the Old Man interrupted.

"Maybe so," admitted Mr. Johns with a grin. "Anyway, to keep you that way, I arranged that you should overhear, through certain pals of mine, my opinion of you at that time."

"Humph!" said old Sam sourly. "That accounts for the rowboat and the forks—and paying you two dollars for every one I took away, hey?"

"Yes, sir," admitted Mr. Johns cheerfully. "But that was true enough, as I shall convince you in a minute. At about this time I had to inject a grain of doubt into your machinery, so I had the *Mohawk Brave* underbid you—at a goodish cost to me, I must admit; but it was necessary, with this North American Jute contract coming on, to make sure of your interest. I think I accomplished it, eh? Please tell me, sir, if I am wrong."

Young Mr. Johns's manner was now a combination of that of a ringmaster, and a famous surgeon demonstrating the scalpel to a class. The Old Man, deeply interested and with, as yet, but a glimmering of the truth, forgot to be annoyed. He nodded. His son-in-law went on.

"When the jute people sent you their contract my time was ripe. But you are, if you'll forgive the expression, Mr. Winter, a difficult subject. It was necessary to have a last jolt in reserve in case you jibbed at the contract, for I had forced the price so low that no one but a desperate man would touch it. The day you left for New York, as you know, Marion and I were married." Here Marion squeezed her father's arm. "That night Tipkin sent you the lettergram. That was my last and strongest shot. I took steps to see that it was delivered at the crucial moment. Then, when Chappell phoned me that you had signed, I"—he glanced with an apologetic grin at Marion—"that is, Gren and I went out together and got liquored up, for *I knew that I had won!*" In the excitement of the narrative, Mr. Johns's voice recovered a trace of the glorious jubilation of that night.

"But what—" Old Man Winter was on his feet. "How the devil do you figure that out? I smash your business, force you to sell your ships, beat you to time charters that you were after, yet you've got the confounded cheek to say you've won!"

"Yes, sir," said young Mr. Johns modestly, "and if you'll promise not to grow excited, and to forgive us both, I'll tell you."

"Go on!" said the old man grimly, but there was a twinkle in his cold blue eye that might have meant danger—or amusement.

"WELL, you see, sir, it was I who arranged that you should have the privilege of bidding on that charter contract. When you underbid my second ship in Calcutta several months previous, I immediately went to New York and bought the controlling interest in the North American Jute Importers, Limited, of which I am now president. I paid for it with my note, and met that with the proceeds of the sale of the *Iroquois Brave*, which you so kindly took off my hands. Every dollar that my ship forced yours to undercut, even months before you signed that contract, therefore, was so much in my pocket."

"Then you mean to tell me," said Old Man Winter in a hollow voice, "that all the jute I have been carrying practically for nothing for months past belongs—"

"*To me!* Exactly, sir! And because of those cheap freight rates I have been able to pretty well corner the jute market of North America. But I hope, sir"—young Mr. Johns's voice dropped, and young Mrs. Johns put her velvet cheek very softly against the old man's own—"I hope you won't hold it against me!"

"*Against you!*" Old Man Winter roared. "Against you! *No!* You young dog, I'm proud of you! So help me, Hannah, I am!" And he blew his nose with a violence which seriously threatened the stability of that embellishment. Then quite unexpectedly he took the young man by the arm and led him to one side, out of the direct and mellow rays of the failing sun, and there, in the soft, gray shadow, whispered industriously for several seconds into Mr. Johns's receptive ear. The effect was magical.

"Why, sir," cried that elated gentleman, "how did you guess it? That is exactly what we already had decided to call him. Hadn't we, Marion? Samuel Oliver Johns!"

"By heck!" amended the Old Man.

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Mama Peretieux

She Discovers in the Game of Life a Joker That Turns the Trick Against Her

By Oscar Schisgall

MAMA PERETIEUX leaned across the bar of her café much as the gargoyles lean over the buttresses of Notre Dame. Her smile was cynical, even slightly contemptuous; yet it hinted of her pleasure in seeing the tables well occupied. Softly she was humming a song of the streets, and her worn face swayed in rhythm with the tune.

A strange woman was Mama Peretieux, and in some ways a terrible woman. There were those among the half-besotted patrons of her dive who declared vehemently, though hushedly, that the devil had blasted her soul. She was bad—earnestly, proudly bad. At times, when she laughed triumphantly over the beer-stained bar, she asserted loudly that her conscience, like her youth, had died in the slums of Paris. Gaily had she relinquished them; in truth, she had tossed her head recklessly as they were sucked into the slime of a filthy underworld. What mattered youth and beauty and finesse, as long as incessant profits flowed over the bar? Pah! It is money which counts! All else is inconsequential!

A gaunt woman, tall and graceless, she appeared to be in her sixties, though actually she was less than fifty. Her hair had turned a lifeless gray; she seldom combed it, but often her bony fingers would caress the thin wisps with the dainty touch of a duchess. It straggled about her face, as tangled as the snakes of Medusa; and it furnished a fitting frame for her unusual features. High cheek-bones jutted out beneath piercing eyes of an uncertain blue tint. To peer steadily into those eyes was impossible. They frightened even some of the old rogues who counted themselves her friends.

To the clothes which had been in fashion when she had passed through her romantic age, Mama Peretieux still adhered. Her voluminous blue skirt had once contained bustles; they were gone now, and only a billowing cloth remained. Above it she wore a shirt-waist on which yellow flowers, conceivably dandelions, had been embroidered. Of the waist she was extremely proud. It had belonged, at a distant time, to a fatuous lady of the Parisian aristocracy; but, unfortunately, the lady had become intoxicated in the café. She had been put to sleep quite tenderly in Mama's own bed—an unexpected termination to a slumming party. And—well, the waist had seemed pretty; it was stripped, without ceremony, from the benumbed lady's back.

So as to preserve the treasure as long as possible, Mama Peretieux wore a shawl which fell over her shoulders. It was black, its fringed edges torn and stained with various beverages. But it performed satisfactorily its duty of protecting the waist.

As for the café over which she presided blatantly, it was a place stuffily pressed into a basement. Several wooden tables, unsteady on their legs, filled the snug little room. And always it was hazy and pungent and uncomfortably warm because of the clouds of cigarette smoke lazily undulating about the gas jets. It did possess, however, one unique feature—an inspiration imported from American barrooms. Behind the wooden counter stretched a long, dirty mirror. It covered the entire wall. On it Mama Peretieux had scrawled with white soap the philosophy of which she boasted:

"C'est facile d'être bon; seulement les braves sont mauvais."

To curious foreigners who sometimes frequented her café in order to obtain a glimpse of "the real Paris, you know, not the tinsel of the boulevards," Mama Peretieux was always delighted to translate the slogan. Bombastically she would read, pointing to each word like a child perusing a primer:

"It is easy to be good; only the brave are bad!"

And then she would laugh with bitter cynicism, mutter an indistinct expletive, and shuffle off, her long hand wiping a rag over the bar. For many years those soaped words had adorned the mirror, and probably they would remain there indefinitely. To chance visitors they were part of the atmosphere, like the creaking tables and the smoke. To the police they were a symbol of a defiant, twisted mind. To the regular patrons of the dive they were a rollicking jest. But to Mama Peretieux they were a veritable dogma. She had heard the phrase uttered by her husband, and had pounced upon it as a condensation of the world's wisdom. That had been a year before the guillotine bit off her husband's head.

NOW she leaned over the bar, her fingers drumming on the wood. She was humming rather pleasantly while her deep eyes were fixed upon an anomaly in her establishment. As out of place as peacocks among crows, four fashionable slummers were seated around a table near the bar. Two women were there—gorgeous creatures in white evening gowns. Inwardly Mama scoffed as she looked upon their scintillating splendors. They had dared to wear jewels!

But then, she informed herself dryly, they were quite safe. For was not that plump gentleman beside the blonde woman Monsieur Edouard Castel, of the Department of Police? Of course. Mama knew him well, too well. And he, unfortunately, knew Mama. No, nothing would happen to the ladies' jewels while Monsieur Castel was present; that is to say, nothing would happen at the hands of Mama Peretieux.

Naturally, she could not be responsible for any possessive desires which might prompt others of her guests to practice the gentle art of legerdemain.

As she stared at the four low-voiced visitors, she cursed the fad which had seized Paris. Why was it necessary for these aristocrats to amuse themselves by entering such places as the Café Peretieux? Could they find no other thrilling adventures after the theater? Little wonder that so many thefts were being reported! Here were fools deliberately flaunting temptation before weak men in need of money.

That exquisite diadem, for example, in the blonde woman's hair; was it not folly to wear it on an after-theater expedition such as this? Pah! Some people were simply brainless!

With embarrassing abruptness Mama Peretieux's inspection of the glittering diadem ended. She felt the gaze of Monsieur Castel—a sharp, suspicious gaze. And she turned away, suddenly finding it expedient to wipe spilled beer from the bar. Surreptitiously she watched Monsieur Castel. Not until his obvious suspicion subsided did she breathe easily. Again she began humming.

To the slummers' table she served wine, and she received a generous payment with exaggerated gratitude; the distrustful glance which Monsieur Castel bestowed upon her she succeeded in meeting with a smile of suave mockery and infinite superiority. In it lay a vague challenge. The gentleman mumbled something and frowned impotently at his wine. It was difficult to make Mama Peretieux respect the law—very difficult!

Queen of the café, she leaned once more against the bar and surveyed with a certain tolerance the emaciated girls laughing at the witticisms of their coarse table companions. There were many of those girls—haggard creatures struggling to cling to the charms of youth by the lavish use of rouge and powder and vermilion lipstick. But their mirth was empty, insincere; they strove to supplement it with the artificial hilarity contained in liquor. And the men—obviously they were waiting. In their glazed eyes hovered unmistakable lust. Soon the girls would be sufficiently intoxicated. . . .

Of a sudden Mama Peretieux straightened. A threatening scowl gripped her rugged features. Grimly her lips tightened to a severe line, while she glowered at the two who had just entered the door.

One of the newcomers, a girl strangely unlike any of the others, smiled warmly at Mama. She was tall, even stately. A simple blue dress and a sport hat smartly

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tilted gave her that vague air of being chic. And as she strode easily across the café, there was a free suppleness in her movements which attracted many a fascinated eye. Some of the men might have risen impetuously, had not detaining hands fallen upon their arms.

This was Liane, daughter of Mama Peretieux and the only thing that the old woman considered more important than the café. Straight to her mother went the girl, and her greeting, though cheerful, caused Mama to gasp.

"*Eh bien*, we have decided, Paul and I. Tomorrow we shall be married!"

FOR a long moment Mama Peretieux stood inarticulate. Her eyes were wide, her mouth open. Once her hands rose, but they dropped again.

"You—what?" she finally managed to gulp.

"We are going to be married. Why do you look so shocked? You expected it, didn't you, Mama?"

Perplexity had displaced the happiness in Liane's expression. She began taking off her little hat, as oblivious to the patrons of the café as if they were chairs. Her russet hair shimmered under the yellow gas light; it glowed like copper when she shook it, allowing the dim effulgence to sink into its depths.

Mama Peretieux's gaze wandered with bewildered uncertainty to the young man who had accompanied Liane into the café. He had fallen upon a chair near the door, and already he was in mirthful conversation with an aged, besotted hack driver.

"You and Paul—" murmured Mama Peretieux. "Why, Liane—*sacré*, are you an idiot? That prison rat—that—that—"

But Liane's sudden hauteur silenced Mama. The girl's chin rose. Her eyes blazed. In the twenty years of her life she had learned how to oppose her mother's will. Obstinacy must be conquered by obstinacy.

"Please!" she snapped. "Try to be civil about it. Paul is all right. You know he is! We have decided. Tomorrow we shall marry. When—when you have thought it over, you can come to my room to congratulate me. Good night!"

Liane turned with the stiffness of a soldier on inspection. Among the tables she wound her way, ignoring every smile and every greeting; for an instant she paused at the small rear door. Her gaze encountered her mother's defiantly. Then she was gone.

Feeling inexplicably weak, Mama Peretieux sought the support of the bar. She forgot her patrons, forgot Monsieur Castel and his splendid ladies, forgot everything save the words of Liane. The girl was going to marry Paul—that wretched jailbird, Paul Manteau! *Nom du diable!* Had that young scoundrel sitting there in the corner dared to lift himself to Liane Peretieux?

If ever Mama Peretieux had cherished a desire, an ambition, it was to thrust Liane out of the filth of the underworld. For herself Mama did not object to an existence in the café; indeed, she gloried in it, for she was the undisputed queen of the other women. But for Liane such a life was unthinkable. All the dormant powers of mother love surged up in the old woman.

Why had she been using the profits of the café to purchase pretty clothes for Liane? Why had she been sending the girl to a dancing school for so many years? Why had she been keeping her, with an ardor almost selfish, from the society of those other young women at the tables? *Sacré*, just to lift her out of the mire! And now—now Liane wished to marry that rascal Paul, who would surely drag her back into the depths. Mama Peretieux actually shuddered.

For years she had cheered herself with a brilliant hope: Liane would learn to dance; she would eventually invade the vaudeville; and then, no one could say how wealthy a husband she might acquire. With her beauty and youth and fascinating figure, the girl could rise to limitless heights. If only she acted correctly, if only she seized opportunities—

That had been Mama's dream. Was it to be smashed by that worthless Paul Manteau? Oh, she knew very well that ostensibly he had reformed. After his visit to prison, he had returned to the Café Peretieux, dejected and haggard. One evening Liane had drawn him aside, and earnestly the two had conversed. It was then that Paul had reformed, if obtaining a position as a plumber's assistant could be termed reformation. At any rate, he had participated in no more of the plans hatched in Mama's café.

Every evening he and Liane had walked together; and though Mama Peretieux had frequently and vigorously objected to her daughter's intimacy with the rogue, Liane had been calmly obdurate. Silently, sometimes respectfully, she had listened to her mother's adjurations. And invariably the following evening she had gone walking again.

That was the way of Liane; a strong-minded girl, she had ever pursued her own inclinations, disdainful of everything, even of Mama's opinions. Fortunately she had sought a path above thae of her unsavory environment. Until now Mama Peretieux had buoyed herself with hopes that Liane would live like a lady. But now—

WITH queer fright in her eyes, she glanced at Paul Manteau. There he sat, a carefree young man, with a happy, round face. He was laughing at the questionable humor of the hack driver. Humor? Pah! How could any one chuckle at those coarse jests? Mama glared down at the bar.

Loose on her bony finger dangled her golden wedding band, an ironic memento of an existence which she had once, long ago, prayed might be endurable. She, too, had married a Paul Manteau; but her husband had never pretended to reform. He had died as he had lived, a swaggering enemy of the people. And Mama Peretieux had gone on alone. She had learned many things, and among them was the knowledge that Liane must avoid the slime which had claimed her mother.

Unexpectedly her reverie was shattered by the raucous voice of a lanky girl sprawling at one of the tables. Somewhat giddy with bad whisky, the young woman cried merrily:

"Hey, Mama! What're you dreaming about when good people are thirsty? Come on, wake up! S-sleepy at this time of night! Come on, you! Y-y-you're becoming an old hag, that's what—an old hag!"

Mama Peretieux looked up, rage smoldering in her deep, narrow eyes. Slowly, yet menacingly she went to the girl's chair. Without uttering a word, she caught the girl by the collar, dragged her savagely to the door, and threw her out.

"An old hag, eh?" she sneered. "You vixen, keep your dirty face out of here till you get sober! Get out before I break your teeth, *canaille!*"

Loud laughter applauded her action, and after it came a few approving shouts to soothe her disturbed vanity. Mama was still queen; no one could insult her!

Even as she started away from the door, she caught sight of two heavy boots on the pavement. So! *Les gendarmes!* A cunning glint stole into her expression and she smiled at Monsieur Edouard Castel. Not without adequate protection had he come; outside a policeman was ready for any emergency.

Regally Mama Peretieux went behind the bar. She looked out over her patrons; and as she looked, her agile brain began to scheme.

Liane must not marry that rascal, Paul. Of course not! Yet Liane, she well knew, *would* marry him—unless something were done. Liane seldom altered a decision.

Thoughtfully Mama considered. Her eyes roved about the café; of their own volition, it seemed, they rested on the jeweled diadem in the hair of the blonde lady. It was a beautiful adornment, and doubtless of tremendous value. It—it—

Mama became suddenly rigid. Into her consciousness had flowed a shrewd suggestion, a remarkable idea. She smiled in appreciation of her ingenuity. At Paul Manteau she cast a quick glance. He was still talking to the old hack driver.

Mama began to move toward a corner behind the bar. Oh, that marriage would not occur if she could avoid it! And she could avoid it. Yes, she had chanced upon an inspiration. Her whole being became vibrant with excitement. A marriage tomorrow, eh? Pah! Never!

In that corner behind the bar was placed the gas meter of the café. Under it was a small wheel. By turning it, the gas could be shut off, the café thrown into impenetrable darkness. Frequently Mama had employed that means of telling her patrons that it was time to go home. Now—she recognized a new use for the wheel.

Her hand rose to it; staring about the room, she assured herself that no one was watching. Very well. Now!

Every light in the café went out. Dense blackness filled the room, and a few voices rose in indignant protest. But Mama Peretieux was not listening. Swiftly she moved toward the spot where sat the four fashionable slummers. She had retained a mental vision of their position. No hesitation lay in her gestures. Her arm brushed against the evening gown of the blonde woman. Her bony fingers sought and found the diadem, plucked it delicately, skilfully, out of the yielding hair.

In a moment she had crossed the room to Paul Manteau's corner. She collided with the boy, bent over him. The diadem slipped into the large pocket of his jacket. . . .

Now, in response to the loud calls, Mama Peretieux cried:

"Don't be frightened, *mes amis!* It is nothing—nothing at all! Somebody touch a match to the gas jets!"

While she spoke, her deft fingers once more turned the little wheel. Within a few seconds yellow light had regained its reign in the Café Peretieux.

Like a distant thunderstorm the rumble of protests subsided. Drinkers resumed their occupation, and girls tried vainly to recall the trend of their conversations. Behind the bar Mama was humming, as if nothing unusual had occurred. She was happy. That marriage, she realized, would not take place!

WHAT happened coincided with her expectations. Monsieur Edouard Castel abruptly sprang to his feet and pointed to the blonde woman's hair. His voice rang through the café.

"Your diadem!" he shouted. "It is gone!"

Instinctively the woman's hand leaped to her head, and she paled. Every one in the café succumbed to a hushed, fearful silence. They knew Monsieur Castel, those patrons. And they were trembling.

Only Mama Peretieux appeared at ease. She continued to wipe stains from her bar, never pausing until Monsieur Castel came to her and glared into her face. Then she smiled at him.

"I am sorry, m'sieu'," she told him softly, "but the ladies were foolish to bring such valuable trinkets to my café."

"You're sorry, are you?" rasped Monsieur Castel. "You'll be more than sorry if that diadem is not returned immediately!"

Mama Peretieux arched her brows in amazement.

"But why do you tell that to me, m'sieu'? What can I do?"

Both fists of Monsieur Castel were held on the bar. His fat features were ugly in their rage. For an instant he was silent; then he said:

"I tell it to you, Mama Peretieux, because it seems to me that you were near our table during the darkness!"

For the first time Mama was disconcerted. She gulped nervously. She glanced toward the back door, where Liane had entered, lured by the excitement. But her smile returned bravely.

"You are wrong, m'sieu'. I was not near your table."

"*Bien!*" decided Monsieur Castel. "We shall soon know!"

He strode to the street door and called. Immediately two huge gendarmes clattered down into the café. In obedience to Monsieur's orders, one of them closed the door and stood with his back against it. Triumphantly the plump gentleman faced Mama Peretieux. Derision quivered in his tones as he announced,

"Every man here will be searched! If we don't find that diadem, then every woman will be searched—at the Prefecture! You will all be arrested, ladies—every one of you!"

Despite the angry murmur, Monsieur Castel snapped a command to one of the gendarmes; that willing officer of the law at once began a systematic search of the pockets and shirts of the male patrons of the Café Peretieux. Every one of them was brusquely told to stand against the wall.

Mama watched, something resembling a leer disfiguring her bony countenance. She watched—while the big gendarme gradually neared the astounded Paul Manteau. Liane, too, was looking on, but she stood aloof, making no effort to conceal her contempt.

Smoothly the plans of Mama Peretieux progressed as she had expected. She saw the prying hand of the gendarme sink into Paul's pocket, saw it emerge with the diadem!

Paul reeled back, a hundred words fighting to plunge from his quivering lips. He was pallid, dumb-struck. He tried to speak, but found the attempt futile. Blankly he gaped into the cruel, hardened face of Monsieur Castel.

"So it was you, eh, Manteau?" whispered the plump gentleman. "You, who told us you were through!"

From the rear door came a soft moan. Liane was there, as colorless as Paul, seeking the support of the wall. Her hand had groped up to her throat. She stood breathless, incredulous. Once she cried:

"Paul!"

Then she said nothing more. But the young man, regaining his self-control, expostulated wildly:

"I didn't do it! I didn't! I don't know anything about it! Don't believe them, Liane! It's a lie!"

By the bar Mama Peretieux, her lips twisted in a strange sneer of victory, looked without speaking. Dryly she chuckled when Monsieur Castel, in deep disgust, said:

"Take the rat away!"

She did not move, even when the slumming party, under the leadership of the gentleman from the Department of Police, started out of the café. Helpless, Paul Manteau had already been dragged away by the burly gendarmes. There was nothing more to be done; the affair was ended. The marriage would not take place.

HUMMING, Mama Peretieux began wiping the bar. Her glance chanced upon the motto scrawled over the mirror, and she smiled appreciatively.

But she stopped with a surprised jerk of her long arm when Liane came to her and said quietly, though tremulously:

"Mama, Paul did not steal that diadem!"

"Eh?" Out of the deep eyes darted a flash. "Eh? He didn't? *Le chien*, he did! You saw for yourself—"

"Paul did not steal it," doggedly persisted Liane. "He is honest. He promised me he would be."

"Ah!" snorted Mama Peretieux. "You believe him, you idiot! Didn't you see? Didn't everybody see? I say good riddance to that liar, that thief!"

Queerly, the girl offered no objection to these epithets. She seemed absorbed with other thoughts; her eyes were misty and looked without seeing at the ceiling. As she stood, so stately and somewhat timid, she sent a glow of pride into her mother. Undeniably, she was beautiful. She deserved more than Paul Manteau, plumber's assistant and jailbird.

"What am I to do?" she murmured. "I cannot marry him if he is—in prison."

"Then you won't—thank Heaven!" retorted Mama Peretieux.

"But—but, Mama, I—*must*—"

The old woman snapped to an erect position. Every bone in her face appeared to jut out as she stared at her daughter. The rag fell from her hand to the floor. She stepped forward hesitantly, fearfully, her fingers curling about the girl's wrist.

"Eh—what, Liane? You—must?"

Her daughter nodded. Her thoughts were still far away.

"You mean—you—you—"

Sudden anger surged into Liane. She glared at her mother, and ejaculated:

"Yes, I must! Don't you understand? I must, or—or— *Dieu!* Why do you think we were going to be married tomorrow, so quickly? Paul promised me—to save me from the disgrace!"

That was all Liane said. Into her eyes tears were welling; she was too proud to weep before this woman who had not known the healing value of tears in countless years. She whirled around, swept out of the café, out of the rear door.

Mama Peretieux gaped upon her patrons, praying that none of them had heard.

Weakly she leaned against the bar. What had she succeeded in doing? She had tried to save her daughter; instead, she had condemned her to eternal disgrace! Though morals had seldom influenced her life, she discovered, quite suddenly, that she could not bear the thought of Liane's sinking to the level of those girls at the tables. Her clever scheme had rebounded. And now—what?

Mama Peretieux was a bad woman. This she acknowledged freely, proudly. Yet even in her badness lurked a spark which had never been entirely extinguished. She was bad—but she was a mother.

She pondered for less than a minute. Then her decision was reached. White, shaking, she rushed out into the street, her black shawl clutched about her tightly. Frantically she peered through the darkness, along the sidewalk, muttering over and over to herself that it was not too late.

And she uttered a cry of sheer joy when she saw, far down the street, the figures of four men passing under a lamp-post. Paul was there, between two gendarmes; and Monsieur Castel, evidently having sent the women home with the other gentleman, walked by the side of his prisoner. He wished, doubtless, to be present at the examination.

Mama Peretieux plunged after them, a tall, ungainly creature whose skirt flapped out behind her. She shouted, waved her hand, and murmured gratefully when she saw the men stop.

Breathless, panting, she reached them. Without explanation she threw her arms about Paul Manteau, drew him close to herself as if she wished to shelter him.

"You fools, he did not do it! *I* did!"

Even while she spoke her nimble fingers, shielded by the darkness, dropped the loose wedding ring into Paul's pocket. Then she stepped away from the boy.

"I did it," she repeated. "I put the light out purposely to get that diadem. Then, when everybody roared, I was afraid. I hid it in Paul's pocket. Understand now, idiots?"

FOR an instant Monsieur Castel seemed stupefied. He gaped. But slowly his fat features approached the rugged countenance of Mama Peretieux.

"So?" he hissed softly. "So? I *thought* I saw you near our table in the darkness!"

"Yes, you did. Now let the boy go!"

From Monsieur Castel issued a triumphant chuckle.

"So!" he repeated. Then, menacingly, he demanded, "Why do you tell us this?"

Mama sneered. "Because, fools," she exclaimed, "if I hadn't told you now, you would be back for me in an hour. Then my punishment would be worse than if I confessed. Besides, I don't want Paul to go to jail for something he did not do. He is staying here—to marry—my Liane."

Even Paul ejaculated in surprise. But Monsieur Castel, raising his hand for silence, asked shrewdly:

"What do you mean—we should be back in an hour? Why?"

"Because," defiantly answered Mama Peretieux, "I have just found that I dropped my ring into his pocket with the diadem! If you had searched him well, you would have found it there. But you were satisfied with the jewels, fools! The searchers at the Prefecture would have done a better job! Then—well, you understand?"

Monsieur Castel did understand. He appeared cruelly happy, of a sudden, and laughed uproariously into Mama's face. His whole plump body shook with his mirth.

"So!" he cried. "At last we have caged the tigress! We have tried for years, and now a ring which slipped off brings success! Well, well! Look in his pockets!"

The gendarmes, somewhat bewildered, lifted the ring out of Paul's pocket. Mechanically the boy took it, eyed it, stared at Mama.

"You dropped it there—" he mumbled.

In triumph too vicious to be praiseworthy, Monsieur Castel interrupted:

"*Bien*, Mama Peretieux. I have waited for a chance like this—waited very long. You won't fool the police any more, dear lady! Down to the Prefecture you come, with *me*, and we will see to it that you don't turn out the lights in the café hereafter. Come, messieurs, take her arms. It is a great day for the Department! The tigress is caught!"

"The tigress," quietly corrected Mama Peretieux, "has not been caught. She has surrendered herself. The victory is hers, not yours."

To this Monsieur Castel had no reply. He shrugged, beckoned the gendarmes to lead their prisoner away.

"And Manteau," asked one of them, "what shall we do with him?"

Monsieur frowned. "Manteau?" He grimaced. "Bah! Send him back! We have Mama, and a greater prize we cannot ask. Send the boy back to his girl. I thought Mama had more to do with this than she admitted before!"

With unnecessary roughness the gendarmes began pulling Mama Peretieux away. She went willingly, even gladly, her head held high. As if his life had just been restored, Paul called to her appealingly:

"Mama! You—your—ring—"

"Give it to Liane—tomorrow, my son!" she answered him over her shoulder. "Use it—at your wedding. . . . And Paul!"

"Yes?"

"Tell Liane to change the motto on the mirror! Let her make it: 'It is easy to be bad; only the brave are good.'"

He did not reply. He was standing very still, watching her vanish in the darkness with her escorts. After a while he looked dazedly down at the ring in his palm. Then wildly, gleefully, he rushed back to the Café Peretieux, to Liane.

Adventure in a City of Romance

CRUSTS

The Mysterious Disappearance of Jabez Scholl, the Millionaire, Created a Great Stir Until He Was Seen in Naples. But Was It He Who Was Seen? A Two-Part Serial

By S. Carleton

Illustrations by Lawrence Herndon

MR. CHARLES CALTHROP paused in his morning toilette and glanced round the back bedroom of the back-street Monte Carlo hotel to which he had stretched his unelastic finances.

The two objects which caught his appraising eye were the semi-hot radiator that battled feebly with the living lie of the Riviera January climate, and the tray which had held his remarkably inadequate breakfast. He grinned scornfully at the radiator, stretched out a capable hand to the breakfast tray and absently, as of long habit, pocketed the one small piece of crusty bread which iron self-control alone had allowed to remain on it. It was a habit as curiously contradictory to some of his habits as it was unconscious from long usage. Every morning of his life Mr. Calthrop emerged on the outside world with a bit of bread left from his breakfast in his pocket; rich or poor, up or down, he was never without a crust for such as had no crusts. Just why, was his affair.

This morning he pursued his ritual as usual, though a more thrifty person might perhaps have remembered that bread was bread—and best eaten. With the exception of one hundred and sixty francs—which at that day's rate of exchange did not reach any watermark he cared to consider—a month's ticket of admission to the Casino on the hill above him, and the crusty bit of bread in his pocket, Mr. Calthrop could not be said to have any means of support, visible or otherwise. Neither could he be said to look worried over it.

Tall, high-headed, bronzed from directing the efforts of a grading gang on an abortive railway in Calabria which had expired suddenly one dark night, leaving him with just not enough money to return to New York, his rather hatchet face lit with hazel eyes so softly pleasant as to hide the hard core in them, he put on his coat and achieved a triumphant example of a remarkably well-dressed man—in extremely old clothes and his second last clean collar. He scanned his reflection in the glass and was comfortably aware of it, caught up a grayish felt hat that had once been mole-color, and went downstairs to the street, past a dark brown concierge in a very white office; a person of insight and calm and —incidentally—his only acquaintance in Monte Carlo. With him Mr. Calthrop exchanged a smile of understanding.

He disappeared into a world of small clean-washed streets, brilliant with sunshine and the glitter of a turquoise sea over the low white wall of the little circular port. An American yacht lay there, white and also glittering. Her name did not meet Mr. Calthrop's glance, nor did he search for it. He strolled up the hill from the Condamine to the Casino terrace, a personable gentleman without the slightest bulge in his garments from the accustomed bit of crust in his pocket and the sun burning comfortably on his shoulders, until the Casino swallowed him—into the drab-dark end of the room where the trente-et-quarante tables are laid out and there are funereal-green shades over the lights.

It was after one when the sunshine found him again, leaning over the wall of the white terrace behind the yellow Casino with a cold wind blowing round his legs, and gazing with somewhat blank hazel eyes at a sea a trifle more turquoise than usual. Luck had been luck: Mr. Calthrop preferred not to think of it, or even of the sixty francs which still remained to him for his one night's hotel bill, a tip to the dark brown concierge and ten francs for subsistence. Instead he was filled with deep and unenthusiastic vision, realistic to a splinter, of the railroad ties from Monte Carlo to Marseilles. The crack of a double-barreled shotgun somewhere below him spilt the vision like wine out of a glass. Over the white railing he leaned on, high above the turquoise sea, Mr. Calthrop looked down.

BELOW him was an oblong of the greenest grass in the world; five gray concrete paths converging from five gray pigeon traps to the hut under the terrace that controlled them; and a dull half-dead pigeon staggering on the emerald grass beyond the trap which had just released it. The liver-colored pointer who retrieves the shot pigeons and howls when the band plays on the terrace ran out for the staggerer and returned to oblivion and the hut. A second dull pigeon emerged slowly into the sunshine from a lifted trap, tried heavily for flight, rose a yard—and a second couple of shots rang out.

Mr. Calthrop, accustomed to other methods of sport, observed in pregnant silence that the retrieved pigeon had a broken wing and was short one leg. A third bird flew wounded over the turquoise sea beyond the emerald-green oblong, fell, and one of the pigeon boats under the sea wall rowed for it and missed it. The turquoise sea took it, still struggling feebly for flight; and healthy contempt took Mr. Calthrop.

"Well," said he calmly and out loud, "if that's pigeon-shooting at Monte Carlo, it's a mug's game!"

And a voice at his elbow inquired out loud also, and not calmly: "May I ask why?"

Mr. Calthrop had no intention of answering. He shrugged one shoulder, made a half-turn away, and was suddenly aware of the face of the slight man in brown clothes who had spoken to him. He took an instant and instinctive dislike to it and a sudden desire for plain American words.

"Loaded dice," he drawled politely. "Pigeons haven't a look in! Clay birds now, at high velocity, might mean something like shooting!"

"Really? I suppose you wouldn't know that some of the best shots in the world come here!"

The words were nothing, but the voice was insolent. This time Mr. Calthrop did not shrug his shoulders; he committed to memory, meticulously, the speaker's face, young, pale and parchment-finished. The smooth lips were a boy's; the set of them a man's, and a hard man's at that. But it was the eyes that really annoyed Calthrop. They were hazel and uncannily like his own, but with a difference. They were close together, the hard core in them was plain, and they roved absently over the face of Monte Carlo and creation with an odd effect of seeing nothing and yet registering the meanest feather in the meanest passing hat. Calthrop would have bet something—if he had had it—that the slight brown-clad man's ears did likewise; he had a fresh access of dislike.

"I suppose they do—one class of them! The pots come to something, don't they? I hear they're going to move it over to French soil and somewhere more secluded, like slaughter-houses—this maiming business! I apologize for calling it a mug's game: it's a game for men who've come down to it," he drawled, this time without politeness. As he moved away he felt the absent, all-seeing eyes flick after him and turn back without interest in his near-threadbare blue serge to the pigeon shoot below.

"Money on it himself!" Mr. Calthrop smiled comfortably, his own shots at least having gone home. He wondered for the space of ten steps if his late interlocutor were English or American, and wondered something else with a poignancy that brought him to a full stop in front of the Café de Paris. "By George, where am I going to get something to *eat!*"

There were the ten francs in his pocket, of course, and there was the café in front of him. But the ten francs required remarkably judicious spreading with a remarkably careful knife—from Monte Carlo to any kind of port where you could work your way to America. And the Café de Paris! Mr. Calthrop raised dispassionate eyes and surveyed the bill of fare and prices. Eighteen francs for eggs, *tournedos*, and cheese. It was not excessive, merely impossible.

"COFFEE *after* lunch will do *me!*" he reflected over the cravings of his empty stomach, and remembered the crust of bread in his pocket.

It was with a shock. It was the first time in his life he had ever really and practically remembered it as regarded personal use. But he had not come to that yet! He put the abject thought aside. Yet it sneaked beside him as he strolled up the slope to the quiet gardens with the labeled trees and the beds whose flowers are changed in the night like clothes: even a crust of bread would do something to fill the empty canals with which he was mainly populated. Mr. Calthrop frowned forbiddingly, thrust his hand into his pocket for the Paris edition of the *Daily Mail* acquired before his financial crisis, sat down on a bench in a retired corner of the gardens to pass the time till he chose to drink coffee after the lunch he had not had, and was taken by an instant and furiously covetous desire for the crust in his blue serge pocket. It was all very well to say he had not come to that yet, but:

"By George! It's not as if I'd be defrauding a likely beggar," he snapped. "I was pretty well all over town when I came yesterday and I didn't see even an empty-looking cat. I don't believe there is such a thing as a beggar in the whole of this face-washed, polished-up place!"

The sensible thing to do was to eat his bread, go down to the café for coffee, and—"My great Mike!" said Mr. Calthrop, with reckless desertion of the road of righteousness after one manly step on it. "Go back to the Casino and gamble on that hotel bill! It can't be much worse!" He cast down the *Daily Mail* unlooked at, slid his hand into his pocket for the crust there was no beggar to want, and sat staring, with his bit of bread in his hand.

There was a beggar to want it. Up the steep path opposite Calthrop a small figure was toiling, a starved, cinnamon-haired skeleton of a dog with weak legs that trembled. He was of no particular family, yet the odds were that one of his parents had been highly connected, for in spite of circumstances and despair he was gallant still. Wherever he was going he meant to go, seeking a phantom of possible food. Calthrop sat motionless, watching the small patient courage that toiled up the hill, and would continue to toil till what it did not know was its soul left it. Each of its slow steps was coming harder than the last till one step did not come at all. Suddenly and very quietly the cinnamon-haired dog lay down. Mr. Calthrop arose more suddenly and as quietly, his bit of bread in his hand.

It had been no idea of his to be sitting in the gardens at Monte Carlo with a cinnamon dog on his knees, feeding it carefully with bread softened in the little runnel of clear water that passed within convenient reach of a long arm. It was too weak to be ravenous. It ate a little, and feebly, with closed eyes, licked Calthrop's hand. Calthrop stroked it. The closed eyes opened suddenly and looked at him. They were not the usual yellow eyes of the usual tramp dog; they were dark soft brown, with agonized, half-trusting appeal in them. Calthrop kept in an oath—why, he did not know. Nobody, man or beast, had ever looked at him precisely like that. But of course the strange dog was no business of his, and it was time he had that coffee.

He rose as the last crumb was fed into his beggar, set down the dog which was no business of his, reached for the abandoned *Daily Mail*—and once more the dog looked at him. All thoughts of coffee, gambling and his hotel bill left Mr. Calthrop. He tucked the bundle of cinnamon-brown skin and bones under his arm and departed for his back bedroom. But in the very white vestibule of his hotel he pulled up.

The dark brown concierge was regarding him with a dry smile.

"It is a taste," he observed, with a glance at Calthrop's limp burden, "like collecting fans, or dirty postage stamps! I have it myself at times. Other times I have thought the good God was neglecting His business to allow visitors' dogs to be left in

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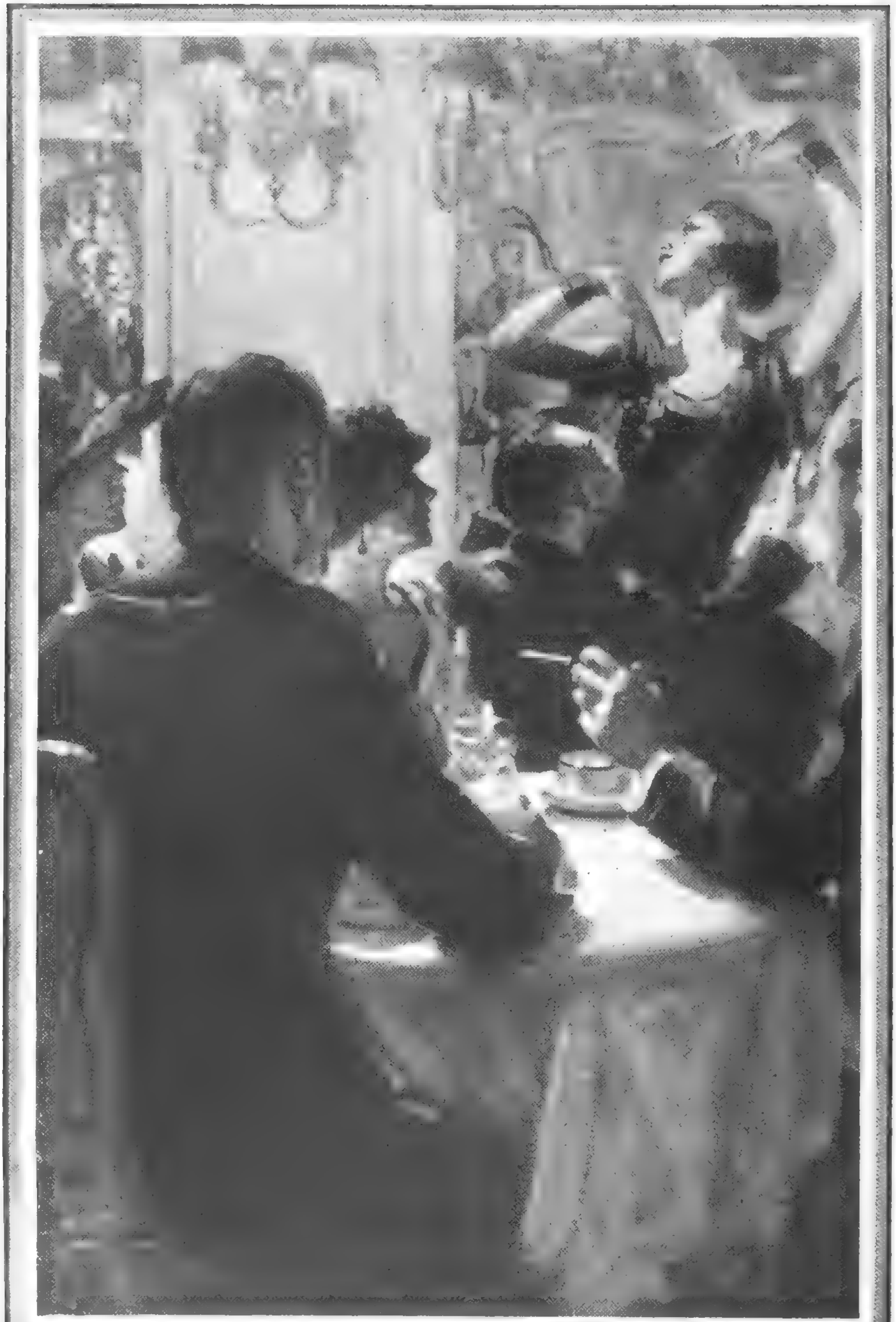


Suddenly, irrevocably, she was back with Calthrop, feathery-light in his outstretched arms! Once more that inexplicable fire and light and joy flashed through him.

the principality without money in their pockets; and again that He might very well leave it to me!"

He took the dog from Calthrop.

"Monsieur will wish to go out and amuse himself. I am here all day and a mat under the table does for the dog. Later, one decides what is best to do with him."

AT DARK, which comes early at Monte Carlo in January, he emerged from the Casino in the company of a mocking devil and the dull unconscious hunger that had gnawed him all day. Under the none too brilliant lights where the motors whiz around the corner he stood thinking. He had had a flair: a false one for lack of his steadying coffee; and he had been wrong to say the situation of his hotel bill could not be worse. His assets of the morning were those of a millionaire, looked at backward by a gentleman whose present possessions on earth were one cinnamon dog—fate yet to be decided, one unread copy of yesterday's Paris edition of the *Daily Mail*, and ten francs. The latter were not now devoted to subsistence: they were merely the tip for the dark brown concierge. For the rest—

"Would you mind doing something for me?" said a girl's voice behind him.

Calthrop wheeled; saw her, a slim figure indistinguishably dressed in a dark cloak thing and the small hat girls crowd down over their eyebrows, and recoiled. The fact in his head came out of him bluntly.

"I've no money; not a thing left." And with that he seized the girl like a bundle and jumped her and himself to the lamp post opposite the Casino. The whizzing motor from around the corner missed both of them by one clean inch. On the light they had landed under, the two looked at each other in the aimless way people do look when the motor has the good luck to miss.

"Thank you! I didn't see it," said the girl quickly. "But I didn't mean anything about money. I only asked if you would do something for me. I want to go in there"—she pointed to the Café de Paris, lit now for the tea and dancing which rests the fatigued gambler for a new effort—"and just for reasons of my own I do not wish to go in alone. There is no need for money: I don't want any tea. Only if you would be so kind as to go in with me I—I would not keep you more than a little while!"

"But you can go in by yourself!" She had a small face with well opened eyes raised to his; of purpose he did not look at her mouth. "I'm afraid I can't go very well—I mean it's impossible. Very kind of you to ask me."

He turned, lifting his hat, and the girl put a small light hand on his arm. There was an easy, controlled pounce to it, like that of a quick cat.

"You might wait till you understand," she said composedly. "I hope to see some one in there, and I do not want him to see me sitting alone like a girl with no friends. I am not going in to make trouble or a scene, if that is what you are afraid of. I merely wish to have some one to talk to me. Look at me—I mean really look, as if I had the good luck to be a man—and you'll see!"

CALTHROP looked. She was not painted, in that light anyhow. She was also remarkably pretty, with gray, dark-lashed eyes and young velvety skin. What he had expected to see in her mouth was not there. It was a noticeable mouth, with beautiful square nicks at the corners and a deep dent in the upper lip. She laughed under his stare, an easy girl's laugh. "Will you decide to take me on trust, and come? I tell you sincerely that all I want is just one half-hour of your time. And if you want to know why I asked you and not any other strange man it is because you looked intelligent—not as if you would misunderstand. You are coming?"

Calthrop had an impulse he did not trouble to scan. It had no connection with the facts that he had nothing in the earthly world to do but return to his back bedroom and read the still unread *Daily Mail* by a half-candlepower light, nor that a cold wind from La Turbie on the mountain above him viciously and suddenly whipped his unfed body through his serge suit.

"Why not?" said he gravely. The girl fell into step with him as he moved forward to the lighted doors of the Café de Paris.

The dancing room was full enough already to have most of the tables reserved. Calthrop, with ten francs in his pocket, used a glance he had been wont to employ at Sherry's. A sudden head waiter emerged from oblivion and pointed out a table on the very verge of the dancing floor; a millionaire's-tip table. Calthrop's hand went mechanically to the solitary ten francs in his pocket. But the head waiter might have been busy: he was gone as the hand came out. The strange girl probably had not noticed him. Her eyes were on the lights and decorations round the walls over Calthrop's head and his followed them. A string of utilitarian white lights marked the cornice. Under them a mauve lantern, a crimson lantern, a yellow, linked with festoons of mauve roses; a crimson lantern, a mauve, a yellow linked with festoons of yellow roses; and so on all round the room, with lumps of green ferns and palms below them—degenerate as to color but somehow exhilarating.

A clink of china brought Calthrop's eyes back to the level of his table, and horror glued them there. His strange girl had said she did not want any tea. Sitting calmly opposite him, younger and more velvety-skinned than ever in the searching light, she had ordered Heaven knew what!—and it was on the table. The thin keen scent of China tea rose into Calthrop's nostrils and was suddenly drowned in the heavy, comforting aroma of coffee, fresh and strong, as the girl tilted a white pot and pushed a cup thick with cream across the table. It was lamentable that for that instant Mr. Calthrop ceased to care that his ten francs were probably insufficient to pay for it or for anything, but that one small crescent-shaped roll had represented his food for the day. He drank. The girl, in what now showed as a black satin cloak, waved a blandly forbidding hand at a waiter bearing large plates of iced chocolate cake.

"Not those horrible things—the 'home cooking' stall at your Y. M. C. A in Paris!" She flicked her eyelashes sweetly at Calthrop. "Plain rolls and butter, garçon—plenty of butter! And be quick."

He was quick. Calthrop was too busy to observe that the girl who had ordered plenty ate nothing. She drank half a cup of China tea in sips, delicately, her eyes on the café entrance at the Casino side where the habitués come in. Calthrop, eating plenty of butter, still regardless of the bill, might have been dead for all the notice she took of him. The orchestra began, faintly jazz and rather pointless; the occupants of most of the other tables arose and danced, leaving lumps of half-consumed chocolate cake to be returned to. Calthrop finished his third cup of coffee, and remembered that he had once danced reasonably well. The majority of men before him did not. The girl in the black satin cloak turned her head from the entrance door.

"I should like to talk to you, and I cannot because I am worrying out something," she announced abruptly. "If you can dance will you come and dance for a moment? I find it an assistance when I want to think." And she rose as Calthrop nodded.

IF HE had expected her to slip her cloak off she did not. It was very faintly scented and softly slippery where his arm went round her, and at once he forgot it. He danced more than fairly, the girls he had been used to dance with, conspicuously well; but inside of thirty seconds he knew that no girl he had ever danced with moved like this one in the softly slippery black cloak. Oddly, tacitly, she controlled him, without once guiding him. Strong, floating, exquisitely steady, she went once round the floor with him—and opposite their table she stopped.

"That was very"—she paused with a curious thoughtful stare at his fine-run height, the carriage of his head—"very nice! I did not expect you to dance so well. Presently, if you do not mind, we will dance again. Will you please be ready, instantly, if I rise? Now we will talk. Ah!" The white lights round the cornice had winked out; rose-colored lights blinked into their places. "This is for the professionals! That is Nanni, the last year's girl; her partner used to be a waiter. The one in green, not dancing, is Tonia, this year's girl. While we talk you can watch Nanni dance." But what she herself was watching still was the side entrance.

Calthrop's eyes drifted obediently to Nanni, a little thick-figured, but very softly graceful, and back again to his strange girl. "You dance better than she does," he said directly, and had a direct assent.

"Oh, yes, but Nanni is not my concern; I have more interest in Tonia. Only not now." Very few girls could have watched a door so steadily without staring and bestowed grave interest on Calthrop at the same time. "I suppose you have just come over. Have you seen anything of Europe?"

A reel of vividly variegated film ran three years off before Calthrop's mind. The utter crash in his affairs which had synchronized with what might have been considered an expensive career even for Paris, the instant cessation of any income whatever, the lack of any desire to return to New York and a life he could no longer keep up with; a wildcat job in Spain, half paid; one in Trieste, not paid at all; and finally the defunct Calabrian railway, Monte Carlo, and a vista of railroad ties open for a quiet walk to—probably—Marseilles. He said: "I've seen a little of Europe. I've been over some time."

"You play?" The girl's chin lifted toward the unseen Casino.

"If you call losing a hundred and fifty francs playing— You do, of course?"

"Oh, no! It would interfere—I mean I do other things. Besides, I find this place wastes money. If"—her hands were busy with something on her lap—"you should ever find yourself wishing to play here inexpensively you should go to live at La Turbie—you can see the village high up on the mountain behind you! It is one-tenth the price of Monte Carlo. Not at the grand hotel, naturally, or even at the poor ones, but—wait! I have a note to write and at the same time I will write an address for you. It is a sort of hotel, very humble and not known, but it is clean. And the funicular makes it simple to come down to Monte Carlo."

She drew a notebook from somewhere in the black satin cloak, and wrote in it for what seemed a long time; thinking, stopping to bite her pencil, but never scratching out. Presently she tore away some neat pages, folded them up on her lap, her hands once more under the table, and harked back. "The La Turbie hotel is plain, you understand. Still, it is where I should stay if I wished to gamble here!" But if she had written the address she made no move to give it to him.

Calthrop saw no reason to remind her of it. Staying at La Turbie or anywhere else was as impossible as at Monte Carlo, and unlikely to concern him. What did, came out of him: "Why—really—did you chance speaking to me outside?"

"I saw you with a dog this morning." Calthrop reddened. "No, I did not mention it at first; men hate being seen doing those things. I was afraid of putting you off. But"—softly and without hurry she was unfastening her black satin cloak—"it seemed to me it was lucky to meet you again. The usual Monte Carlo man would have been of no use to me. And—" She stopped as if her speech had been cut off with a knife. For one slow-breathing moment she was silent, her gaze on the side door. Then she leaned over the table to Calthrop—close. "Now, I want to dance again." Her wide-opened eyes were grave on his face. "Rise when I do, the instant the music begins. And remember: this time all you have to do is to follow me! You dance *well:* that is all you need think of, and of following me!" There was no particular expression on her face and certainly no excitement, or Calthrop might not have arisen as a lamb to the slaughter. "Remember, too, that I dance better than Tonia. You and I have been friends for half an hour: what I want of you is to help me dance a hundred times better than Tonia. And I think now—" She was on her feet with so languid a smile and gesture that he hardly realized she was lightning-quick. "Now!"

BLACK, softly slippery, her cloak slid down on her chair. Her dress was black, too, with queer glittering black embroideries and queerest sleeves: the new Paquin sleeves, if Calthrop had known it. She slid him forward with a finger tip on his elbow as the first notes of the faintly jazz band struggled with the noise in the room, slid into his arms, and with the easy confidence of accustomed feet began a slow step that by luck he knew. As the two of them moved alone on the shining brown square of the dancing floor, a queer shock like strange fire and joy and electricity blended ran through Calthrop's blood and he knew something else, beyond the first conventional steps of the dance. The girl with him had him, as if she were a sorceress; the very touch of her fingers was possession. Charles Calthrop, twenty-seven, sensible—at times—was merely a puppet she worked without a string, or a man bewitched. He had never danced as he was dancing now. And at arm's length—in his arms—six feet away from him—a moth, an angel, a wave of the sea told him once and again what to do.

Three minutes, five minutes they danced. The floor around them was still empty; no one else was dancing. Calthrop lifted preoccupied eyes to see why: and the wild-fire in his body that the strange girl was using as a sculptor uses clay went out, froze to ice. The red lights had come on, replacing the white ones. He and she were alone on the floor in the professional's interval that properly belonged to Tonia, this year's girl. Any instant they would be turned off, hissed off—there would be a scene! For one sickening, furious second he stood paralyzed and alone, with the girl floating to him like a relentless summer wave soft with stilled strength.

"Go on," said the girl in the whisper of a fury, languid arms lifted to his neck, ivory arms with the queer black sleeves hanging clear from them. "Go *on!* Down on your knees!"

"They will turn us off in one moment!" It said something for Mr. Calthrop that he spoke with the steady coldness of experience.

"They will do nothing of the kind. Down on your knees—hold out your arms—wait for me! I am going to *dance!*"

For all the hard core in his eyes Calthrop knelt, hypnotized; hypnotized, he watched her. She was more than a wave now: she was elemental; life, mystery, flame. But she danced. He did not know what she danced. Nor did he ever know that Nanni, last year's girl, stood watching with honest delight on her face; or that Tonia—Tonia, this year's girl—stood pale, without even anger in her chilled heart. And the other girl danced. Slowly—but suddenly, irrevocably—she was back with Calthrop; slack, nerveless, yet how feathery-light in his outstretched arms! Once more that inexplicable fire and light and joy flashed through him. He swung her high over his head in sudden fierce and real passion; held her there—exquisite, drooping, abandoned—set her down: and over his head the degenerate mauve and yellow lanterns of the Café de Paris jumped and rocked. The whole room rocked. Men and women clapped and shouted, stood on chairs, pounded with little high-heeled shoes; clapped again. A tall Italian made the room ring with 'Brava! Bravissima!' And the girl at Calthrop's side gave him one tiny push with a finger tip.

Mr. Calthrop awoke. It would be he who would catch it, not the girl; he who must bear the inevitable result of the fool thing she had done; and all he could do was to wait and stick it as decently as might be. Scarlet with raw masculine shame, furious at having made one scene and being about to share in another, he glanced round him; and from across the room, dead opposite, met the absent, all-seeing eyes of the parchment-finished man he had drawled at over the pigeon-shooting. They flicked at him with a curious amused sneer, and flicked away. Idiotically, senselessly, it was the last straw on his disgrace. The red lights blinked out, the white lights winked on. Calthrop moved blindly to his late table and sat down, waiting for a shameful and well deserved notice to quit. It did not come. No one came; no one looked at him. But for one man, the room had eyes only for the girl. Calthrop stared, dazzled, in search of her, and found her.

SHE stood on the dancing floor, as he had left her; only she did not stand alone. There were two men with her: one elderly, with screwed-up diamond-bright eyes on her face; the other young and quiet, with an odd flat look like that of a man come out of a trance—Calthrop's own look, if he had known it. The elderly man was speaking fast, half commanding, half imploring; but Calthrop's stare was on the strange girl's face. He would not have known it. The pale cheeks were burning, living roses; the grave wide eyes dark stars; the steady square-cut mouth was laughing, the triumphant unconscious laugh of a girl secure of herself and the world and the men beside her. Her stars of eyes that were full on Calthrop never so much as observed him. She turned round to the elderly man, put her hand into his with a wide, gracious gesture, and as he bowed over it and let it go walked slowly away with him, the other man behind them silent, and following abjectly. And the head waiter touched Calthrop's elbow.

"Madame's cloak," said he; gathered it, and fled. Calthrop saw him shroud the girl with it at the side entrance. She was gone—with the two men, and without so much as turning her head. A queer flat revulsion kept him still, blankly stupid. Before him was his empty coffee cup, his plate with a crust of roll still left on it, and one other thing.

"Great Mike!" said Mr. Calthrop in his mind. "My bill!" The long yellow slip stared at him from the white table where it must have been put while he and that girl were dancing, and for once the illegible figures of a café bill rose up and smote their reader. "*Sixty*-two francs!—sixty-*two!*" Only Providence and long habit kept his face expressionless. He observed the uneaten box of chocolates on the table, the hundred cigarettes—opened, of course; the— But there was no sense in glaring at items. He only wondered why on earth he had not noticed all the ordered trash before. It was a wonder the bill was not twice sixty-two francs!

Of a sudden the full beauty of the situation broke overwhelmingly upon Mr. Calthrop. He had a hotel bill to pay and a dark brown concierge who was also a friend to tip before leaving Monte Carlo; sixty-two francs to produce for tea and something for the waiter to make a decent exit from the mauve and yellow and crimson lights of the accursed Café de Paris; and against them one cinnamon-colored dog, breed unknown—and a ten-franc note! Involuntarily, irrelevantly, if he had not been inwardly aware of the absent, all-seeing eyes of the parchment-finished man flicking over him once more out of the shadow of a palm clump, the morning's pigeon-shooting below the Casino intruded on his memory. He had called it a mug's game!

"Well, that girl," Calthrop reflected bitterly—he observed the side exit, the head waiter too apparently between it and him, thought of six ways of escape and abandoned them all—"that girl was a mug's game too!"

He slid his hand into his pocket for his ten francs and temporary measures, and sat paralyzed. His ten-franc note was gone.

FOR one hideous instant Mr. Calthrop's mind ceased to work in any way but theory.

He had no longer any ten francs for temporary measures with the head waiter. He could leave his watch; but unfortunately it was a Waterbury of prehistoric vintage. There was the other course of giving his hotel address and a note to the concierge: only how in the devil could he and a cinnamon dog settle afterward with the concierge? Mr. Calthrop lost any care for the sneeringly amused eyes that were still flicking him from the palm clump; all his desire was to get out. The best way was to leave his unpaid-for table behind him and have the scene at the door. Yet before he rose his hand went mechanically into his empty coat pockets, the lower side ones where most men keep stray Monte Carlo chips. There was no ten-franc note there, as he had known there would be none, but his fingers closed stupidly on something else—harder, thicker. He had it out, and stared at scribbled paper, folded up with a pin through and through it.

"That girl!" he thought profanely. It was that girl's lunatic hotel address; she must have slipped it into his pocket while he was dancing. Any hotel address was of merely ironic interest to Mr. Calthrop; yet suddenly, at a feeling between his fingers, he pulled the pin out of the wad of paper. Once more only Providence and long habit kept his face steady. Folded inside the paper was a thousand-franc note. As for its wrapping, there was no lonely hotel address on it. It was covered with small writing, black and legible. Calthrop sat emotionless: he was past emotion. Mechanically he put the thousand francs in his breast pocket and absorbed the neat pages torn from the girl's notebook.

> I write this on the chance that I shall not see you again. If all goes well with me I shall put it in your pocket while we dance and you will understand it was impossible for me to come back and say good-by. Luigi will be here this afternoon. He is the one manager in the world I want to see me dance—you will understand why . . .

Calthrop did, even after burial in the wilds of Calabria. Luigi ruled dancing, in New York, Paris, everywhere.

> . . . and the one manager who has always refused even to see me. He has a prejudice against me for reasons I have nothing to do with. My only hope to get in with him is to take him by surprise. He is in Monte Carlo just for today. This afternoon he is coming here to see Tonia dance; and I mean now to have him see me instead. I followed Luigi here with that intention, but before I met you I knew it was hopeless. My partner broke a tendon getting off the train this morning and I dared not take any stray professional—these things have to be done

alone. When I met you I had given up everything except the chance, perhaps, of just *speaking* to Luigi: I told the truth when I said I only wanted you to talk to me while I waited for that in the café. But after I found out how you could dance I changed my mind. Forgiveness for that, please, and my best thanks. If you find this in your pocket you will know I have reason for both. I never meant you to pay when I ordered tea; I knew you had no money. Please regard what I leave with this as earned by giving me my chance. If you see me leave with Luigi you will know I go with him when he leaves tonight, and if the money sticks in your throat—men are so silly about money—take it to the Casino and play! You need not be afraid of any fuss about our dancing: I will have arranged that.

Don't give the head waiter anything; I did. And don't forget to take the box of cigarettes. If you want the La Turbie hotel it is the only pink house through the first archway off the Street of the Ghetto, second floor. Ask for Francine.

Good-by.

The insolent courage of her hit Calthrop in the wind. "Well, the poor little devil—collecting herself to write like that! I wonder if there *is* any hotel at La Turbie!" The odds were there was not, but it did not concern a man who had no intention of going up to see. The thousand francs he would face presently: for now he had to use it. All he cared for was to leave the Café de Paris with his bill paid, and pelt past the red light and the green light at the entrance to the little circular port where the American yacht lay ghostly, to his back bedroom in the Condamine.

AT ELEVEN that night he sat in that refuge, nine hundred of his thousand francs before him. He had put off facing it as long as he could. He had dined, at the dancing girl's expense; against the radiator—which was really hot toward midnight—reclined the cinnamon dog, who had also dined and been christened with the unimposing name of Crusts into the bargain. All was peace, except the frown worn by Mr. Calthrop in addition to his pajamas and the hard core in his eyes as he regarded most of a thousand francs. The thing was impossible! He could not live on a girl's charity! First thing in the morning he would pay his hotel bill, tell the concierge to have Crusts chloroformed, and get out of Monte Carlo somewhere—anywhere—that he could get work and pay back a thousand francs to a girl: it ought to be easy enough to find a girl who had gone to dance like that for Luigi! Nobody could take money from her this way, like a tramp!—and there was no other earthly way to look at it. He stared blackly at the radiator, and the cinnamon dog gathered its bones to turn on its other skeleton side and blink at him adoringly.

"I don't suppose you've any suggestions to offer, Crusts—you old fool, you!—about having a girl chuck money at me like bread to a dog," Calthrop drawled, and checked. The hard core in his eyes melted slowly into enlightened recollection. The girl's thousand francs was—why, it was—

"Crusts, just crusts, dog!" he swore aloud. "Mine fed into you and that girl's into me—till I can pay her back. That's what it comes to!"

With the bald truth all his silly fuss about the thousand francs died in him with suddenness and dispatch. The whole thing did not amount to a hundred dollars with exchange where it was: it would be queer if some day he could not pay a girl back a hundred dollars! For the present—Mr. Calthrop whistled. She had written: "Take it to the Casino and play if it sticks in your throat." Well, he would play, just for one day! He could settle the hotel bill and the concierge, keep a frugal allowance for contingencies, and play with the rest. If he lost he and the cinnamon dog—there was no need to be chloroforming dogs yet—could tramp somewhere else; if he won it would be a brilliantly easy way to pay back that money. Tomorrow ought to see him doubles or quits, but leaving Monte Carlo either way.

Abrupt calm fell on Mr. Calthrop, the calm of a man at home and at peace. The thousand francs—absurdly, and thanks to a stray dog—was faced. He slid into bed, relaxed luxuriously, and opened the *Daily Mail* he had carried about unread all day. The pictures on the back page were not thrilling. He was equally uninterested in a divorced duchess, Wyatt falling at a hurdle, and a snapshot of a cross-looking old man labeled "Missing American millionaire found: Mr. Jabez Scholl on his yacht at Monte Carlo." But on the first page something caught his eye. "Twenty thousand dollars reward!" Mr. Calthrop read, and grinned at himself for a fool.

There was no twenty thousand reward. The black heading was merely the eye-catcher it had proved, and concerned Mr.

Jabez Scholl again. Two months since, when the apparently well-known Mr. Scholl had sold both ends and the middle of his string of picture palaces to a number of interests for a staggering sum and omitted either to bank it or to return to his Chicago home and family after closing up the deal in New York the said family had proceeded to raise the roof. Murder and robbery were probably the least things which had overtaken their parent and provider: no letter had been received from him, no person had seen him, no checks been drawn on his bank accounts since the day he left Chicago with his customary roll in his pocket and no money deposited.

The bald fact was that he and his secretary and the money for the picture palaces had disappeared off the face of the earth and stayed disappeared. That his secretary had either murdered Mr. Scholl or been murdered with him was the opinion of his distracted wife and daughters. They had set every detective in America on tracks that were nonexistent and finally—in despair and out of their own money—offered twenty thousand dollars for the recovery of their loved one either dead or alive.

Three days ago they had hastily withdrawn the offer. Mr. Scholl, with his maligned and guiltless secretary, had merely gone over to Italy without notifying his family; traveling, for unknown reasons and as he had never been known to do, under a borrowed name and by a line that wandered deviously to the Mediterranean and did not subscribe to Marconi. Mr. Scholl's cable to his family from Naples had not reached them; but Mr. Scholl himself, intact, as were also his secretary and presumably the spoil from the picture palaces, had arrived at Monte Carlo in a new yacht and a furious rage with his family's publicity agent. With the reviving news the domestic reward of twenty thousand dollars was off.

CALTHROP'S perfunctory interest in the Scholl Iliad would have died before its end, but for an unexpected trifle. He had turned back idly to the picture page and the Rockefeller countenance of Mr. Scholl, and a small inconspicuous inset jumped at him: the unmistakable parchment-finished face of the man who had spoken to him over the pigeon-shooting that morning. Under it he read: "Mr. Scholl's secretary, Mr. Wilson, on the Sporting Club steps at Monte Carlo, smilingly puts off reporters who inquire why he had been supposed to be Mr. Scholl's murderer." Below that again was the yacht he had seen in the port, labeled, "The *Gloria*, Mr. Scholl's yacht, lately the property of the Duca di Laiguelia." But Mr. Calthrop was looking at no yachts, only at the portrait of Jabez Scholl's secretary. He was certainly smiling; Calthrop thought he disliked him more when he smiled than when he did not. It was odd he should have encountered him and then the paper with his *dossier*, but—He sat bolt upright, comparing the secretary's picture with a meticulous memory.

"The Scholl family were fools ever to have thought that fellow would do any murdering; he's far too clever," he mused. There must be devious byways in the life of Mr. Jabez Scholl, or he would have had some other kind of secretary. But it was no business of his, any more than Mr. Scholl was. He reflected satisfactorily that he had a clean collar for the morning, cast the *Daily Mail* into the open jaws of his old traveling bag as useful padding, and put out the light. The cinnamon dog ascended his couch in weak but skilful silence and snuggled against him. "Tomorrow, Crusts," murmured Mr. Calthrop, sinking into slumber, "tomorrow we leave Monte Carlo!"

Thirty-six hours later the two of them were there still.

For the first reason Mr. Calthrop had won at the Casino. Not startlingly, but he had won. Playing the *transversales* at an eleven-to-one chance—a slow and toilsome business but sound for a man who was out to make money, not to risk it—he had gathered in not all his required thousand francs, but a respectable nucleus of it. For the second reason Monte Carlo took him.

Going out into the sunshine after his second morning's work to search for lunch he stood dumb. Before him the sun was gold, the sky turquoise, even the brownish palms had taken on a green varnish; and the gay air smelled, swam, reeked of mimosa—the dripping gold showers of it were in every woman's hand. But it was not merely the bland beauty of the place that took him in a net; it was the hard fact that for the first time in months he was making money. Not much, certainly, but still money. And on that came another hard fact. He was also spending. Forty francs a day for his room and as much more for clean collars might not be much in American money, but all the same— He compared supply and demand and whistled: his winnings would not go far at that rate! Nevertheless, he was not going to leave Monte Carlo; in spite of himself he remembered that girl's cheap hotel up at La Turbie.

HIGH above him on the mountain, sideways to Mont Agel where the Golf Club is, La Turbie looked a beastly place, unpleasantly like Calabria, and he had no desire to go there. But it was any port for an anchor. It would do no harm to go up and see if there was a hotel, "in a pink house through the first archway off the Street of the Ghetto," before he consulted the dark brown concierge on getting a cheaper room where he was. Mr. Calthrop lunched frugally, far from the Café de Paris, and was pushed up the mountain-side on the little rack-and-pinion railway by an asthmatic engine that gasped black smoke at his back; and from the station past the kiosk where they sell post cards and Maryland cigarettes to the belvedere overlooking the mountain slope he had just surmounted, La Turbie was as beastly as he had known it would be, in spite of the afternoon sun and the shining white and gold toys of Monte Carlo and Monaco spread out below it. Poverty-stricken, cold and narrow-streeted under the aloofness of the grand hotel where he had no intention of going, it gave him the dry chills.

Where he leaned over the solid stone wall of the semicircular belvedere he looked below him.

First on Monte Carlo, some fifteen hundred feet down—a mere nothing after Calabria; then, immediately beneath him by some twenty feet, at the ground the belvedere was built on. Dead in front of it, between him and the half slope, half precipice that plunged to the abyss of a wooded gorge, was sheer nothing: unless he counted a three-inch rim where a cat could perhaps have scraped by. To his left was what looked like the end of a road, and was merely shabby grass ceasing abruptly on the edge of space. On the left it was fenced inadequately with ancient wooden posts and rails; on the right with a triangular fragment of broken brick wall jutting from the foundation of the belvedere; in the middle—

There was nothing in the middle of the worn grass that looked like the end of a road but a gap between two posts standing unconnected like teeth with a bridge missing; below the gap sudden, unexpected space, with the nearest permanent landing some three hundred feet below.

"Thoroughfare for A Number One cats only, getting round this lookout to wherever cats go; or bung down for a really earnest suicider," Mr. Calthrop reflected indifferently, and turned away. La Turbie appealed to him less than ever; nor did it improve on exploration. Halfway along the smelly lane between tall houses that was labeled "Street of the Ghetto" and where he saw no archway, he turned for flight to Monte Carlo and expense; and checked ludicrously in the middle of a step. At his elbow a little side turning led to gloom through an old Roman doorway: you could call it an archway if you liked! Mr. Calthrop passed under it, came out between shabby forlorn houses into a narrow forlorn passage where an old man was sedulously sweeping rubbish, sidestepped the approaching pile, and stood still. At his right, well in round the corner of the paved passage, was a pink house!

It was like anything in the world but a hotel; only the curiosity of flat surprise made Calthrop scrutinize it. The ground floor was a non-luxurious wineshop, vacant and closed; above was blank pink wall with two windows closed and shuttered against what little air succeeded in traversing the dark passage. There was no sign of occupation in the pink house, yet past the deserted wineshop on its ground floor was an inconspicuous little door that somehow looked used.

"Can't be the place!"

Calthrop stared from the inconspicuous door to the pink house itself, and something kept him staring. It did not strike a casual mind that the blank wall and shuttered windows were somehow sinister, nor that in the silent minute when he stood wondering if it were worth while to go and look for another door in the open round the corner of the passage life and death hung in an unseen balance that half a dozen steps would swing down, but merely that the door squeezed in beside the wineshop was an odd little door and a hairbreadth ajar. Something in the look of it spurred him to get inside it. Being accustomed to Calabria, he did no knocking; he went in—and behind him the little door clicked shut. To his instant and exploring hand it was plain there was no inside latch. He stood locked into chill darkness, that turned to a sudden pallor of faint light above him round the turn of a dim stone stair.

"HOTEL!" he thought scornfully, taking the stair to the light. "Any other pink house in La Turbie might be that girl's hotel, but never this, or—" He jerked up on the turn of the stair, lifting his hat. The light above him was faint reflected sunshine through an open door on the landing and in the doorway against it stood a woman, a black-haired, black-dressed silhouette of furious frozen terror—if he had ever seen terror. But the impression might have been exaggerated, as are all silhouettes. Where Calthrop looked up at her the woman turned sideways to the light through the door and he saw her face, grave, smooth and collected. "Forgot her street door was open and scared green," he guessed, and was right. "Respectable; passion, avarice"—and was half wrong. The passion of the widow Caussade at that moment was to keep her soul inside her skin for one more week.

"Monsieur desires?" she asked in French as he was wondering how he was to speak to her in whatever they did speak at La Turbie. But as he answered she shook her head. "I have no room to let!"

It was set, hostile and final. Calthrop apologized. He should have known the house was not a hotel, but it was easy to make a mistake. All he had been told was that he was to find the only pink house through the first archway off the Street of the Ghetto and ask for Francine.

"What?" The black-dressed woman jumped with what might have been incredible relief. She stared at Calthrop oddly, as a girl had stared outside the Casino, as if she had just realized him; not only his easy, fine-run height, but something in his bronzed face and hazel eyes, even in the very way he had taken off his hat. She smiled suddenly, a curious, beneficent, yet somehow calculating smile.

"Francine!" she exclaimed. "Then Mademoiselle sent you—there is no other person calls me that! You saw her? When?"

"Two days ago"—dryly. He was hot and angry still at the fool he had made of himself, in spite of the thousand francs he was winning back.

"Of course; she was here to catch Monsieur Luigi; she sent me a note that she had no time to come up! Well, I am Francine! But you should have said at once that you were her friend, monsieur; only—even so, I do not know about the room." Calthrop had an odd impression that the brain behind her smile was racing. "When I had Mademoiselle here I had no one else, but now—you see, excepting the storehouse above where I sleep myself I have but the one floor, and it is let. Yet"—she was eager, almost entreating—"I might manage. I should not like a friend of Mademoiselle's to go away if she promised you should stay here and you wish to!"

Calthrop did not. It was too far from the Casino; the cold stair held no promise of comfort, and as for being Mademoiselle's friend! "It depended on the price for a couple of nights," he temporized for retreat. "But if you have no rooms—"

"The price"—she was swift, for reasons of her own she might have been passionately anxious he should stay—"is small: eight francs inclusive, if you care to eat here! But the room is tiny and only reached through my kitchen, if you would look at it. This is the service door Monsieur entered by." She pointed down the stone stair. "The front one is round the corner on an open square and not—not possible for his use. Also the room is very small."

So was eight francs inclusive; small enough to make Mr. Calthrop hug himself as he followed her sharp turn into a small clean kitchen with a large clean stove. Close beside it was the door the reflected sunlight had come through, the door of the most microscopic bedroom he had ever laid eyes on. It might have been seven—a practiced eye said six and a half—by five, chopped off the kitchen. The door end held the door and the head of a bed that the right-hand wall took the length of, the left-hand accommodated a washstand and mirror, and the wall that faced him a chair and a cock-eyed table before a window looking down on a grass-grown square of desolation; the side, he was to discover, of the front door. In the middle of all was standing room, no more. But the sun came into the place, it was warm from the kitchen stove, and somehow inviting. And eight francs a day for it and meals! The stupendous snap kept Calthrop silent.

FRANCINE looked at him without comprehension, turned a curious color, beckoned him out of the bedroom and shut the door.

"I see!" But her voice did not sound as if she did. "Monsieur could never think it large enough even for a couple of days. And—of course there are drawbacks! He could not enter it through the front of the house even if my tenants would let him; there is no way through. Also, fool that I am, I did not remember that a friend of Mademoiselle's could not eat in the kitchen; and there is nowhere else! I suppose"—she had that frozen look of her silhouette again—"Monsieur would not think of staying!"

"What?" Monsieur chuckled. "I'd be proud to eat in your kitchen, Francine, and I like the room. I was only wondering why it cost so little!"

"It costs all it is worth. It is a dog-hole, no more."

"Oh!" Mr. Calthrop hesitated, sudden remembrance in his pleasant hazel eyes. "I—that is, there is a dog, too! But he's been a very poor dog; he wouldn't give any trouble. I suppose you would not let me bring him with me?"

"Of course!"—blandly. "If I do not like him he can go away—unless Monsieur decides to go away himself first."

Calthrop, returning to Monte Carlo and the dog that could go away if he were not liked, thought not, while Francine seemed to want him for some unknown reason and eight francs was the price. And the dark brown concierge, to his surprise, deeply approved of the removal, having two days' leave of absence and a rooted distrust of his understudy as regarded cinnamon dogs. With a fond handshake that engulfed far more than ten francs of Calthrop's he sped the parting guests. By dinner time and through the service door the two of them were installed in the pink house. Calthrop stared at the punctilious table set for one in the kitchen where he was to eat; but as soup, risotto with mushrooms and liver, gave way to roast fowl and the salad of a dream he pushed back an appalled chair. "This is nonsense," he drawled. "You can't afford to feed me like this for eight francs!"

"Why not—since I am obliged to cook for the other tenants and your little costs nothing? You would pay little more at the common hotel here—the clean one! For the grand one above the belvedere I do not know; I never was there." She set a plate of discards before the cinnamon dog, and somewhere in the main house a bell rang.

Francine Caussade stood suddenly and curiously quiet. But Calthrop had not noticed the door into the occupied part of the house from the left-hand side of the kitchen till she slipped through it with a tray. Returning, she closed it softly behind her and stood, snapping her fingers in absorbed thought.

"One must arrange things a little," she murmured with some blankness. "There is a trifle that I forgot. The sick old gentleman the rest of the house is let to does not know about your room: he supposes the space to be all my kitchen. If he did know he would probably turn you out; or the friend who nurses him would. So—if you could be—well, quiet! Your room the old gentleman does not know of is next his; there is a door through beside your washstand that I papered over, but on his side it leads into a clothes cupboard that he might leave open. If you sang or whistled, or your dog howled—*eja!*" She regarded Calthrop significantly. "But from this room he can hear nothing."

"Mean you want me to go?"

"No." Once more she was rigid, as when he had first seen her, her shoulder-blades jammed together as at the touch of an invisible knife. "No! Only if it is possible it seems wise that the old gentleman should not smell out your room or you in it; and the papered-over door is thin!"

"Smell! D'ye mean I can't smoke?" If he were not to *smoke*—

"Bah! Smoke all night if you wish! The friend with the old gentleman smokes cigars without ceasing while the sick one groans; it is only a noise that would matter.

This here"—she bent suddenly and stroked the replete Crusts—"will make none. I see he is a good dog and will be company for me when Monsieur goes down to the tables!"

To Calthrop's surprise Crusts licked her hand, and the interlude was over. Sliding into bed in his microscopic room, he decided that if the old gentleman's room were next door either he was not in it or the papered-over door was more impervious than Francine hoped: he could not hear a sound. Before he knew it he slept. Toward two in the morning he woke. For a long moment he lay listening. But he could not have heard anything, much less a cry; except for his own breathing and Crusts' the room was night-silent. Calthrop turned over and once more slept like the dead.

Crusts did not. Very softly the cinnamon dog raised himself, crept on padded feet to the papered-over door, and sat there with pricked ears in the wand of moonlight that slanted from the open window. There was still no sound. It was odd that in the moonlight the cinnamon dog crouched down slowly between Calthrop's bed and the papered-over door with his hackles rising and his lip lifted clear of savage teeth.

AT THREE o'clock on the following afternoon Mr. Calthrop knew himself to be possessed.

Crusts' demeanor in the moonlight had been wasted on him, his breakfast calm and excellent, his descent to Monte Carlo eventless; but all the same he was possessed. He stood in the drab-dark, hideously lit end of the first room in the Casino where the daylight fights the electric light, dead to the shifting crowd around him; even to the man over whose chair he leaned, a bald man with blue spectacles that he snatched off and on once a minute. All he saw was a green diagrammed table and that he was accomplishing the impossible. He was winning; had been winning for two hours, not on the *transversales* but on the numbers, *en plein!* It was no wonder he was possessed! And his possession still held him; there was something in his head or out of it that would not let him go wrong. Sixteen came up and thirty-five hundred to his one; twenty-four, sixteen again—twice more Mr. Calthrop stretched out a quiet hand and gathered in his gains. It was bad luck to count your winnings. All he knew somewhere inside him was that thirty-odd thousand francs must have replaced his one thousand, counting in this afternoon's work with the driblets he had won before on caution and the *transversales*, and that his luck was not done. He was not thinking, consciously or otherwise; he had discarded all thought and all system. Instead a strange spirit stood behind him prompting, and he obeyed it blindly.

"Sixteen," it ordered sharply. "Sixteen again!"

Once more Calthrop reached out and gathered in his gains. As he pocketed them his strange spirit was silent. Calthrop waited. The croupier's level voice rose. *"Faites vos jeux, messieurs, faites vos jeux,"* And he waited; the wheel began to spin; he waited still. *"Rien ne va pl—"* And sharp, on the last verge of the final minute, the prompting whisper was all but bodily in his ear. "Middle dozen! Put on the limit: quick!" And the middle dozen came up.

But this time Mr. Calthrop put out no hand.

As his twelve hundred francs left his fingers the bald-headed man before him had flung up an unexpected hand to snatch off his eternally wabbling glasses. It caught Calthrop's wrist smartly, jogged it sideways, and his chips flew past the middle dozen and lit on the first. He swooped to pull them back, and checked. He was two seconds too late—for anything but barren satisfaction that his flair had been right and wrath with the old man who had queered it.

"The old misery!" For half a minute the hard core showed in Mr. Calthrop's hazel eyes, and melted suddenly to his usual untroubled gaze. It looked as if a fool and his luck were parted: but even so he had won more hard money than he had touched for some years, let alone that girl's thousand, and it was good-by and thank-you to Monte Carlo. He was done. Yet for a moment he half took it back again. With those uncounted thousands in his pocket it could do no harm to have one more try at his luck before he cashed in and mounted to La Turbie to collect the cinnamon dog and go. With his hands in his chip-crammed pockets he stood watching the table. The numbers were running anyhow, now. He observed, with satisfaction, the bald man in front of him losing violently; and suddenly observed something else. The man had his side of the table plastered colorfully with pink chips; the number came up, and a woman opposite him reached out—cat-quick—for her winnings. The white of her flat hand on the green table held Calthrop's eye as she drew it back, covering them—but it was not quite clever enough.

The croupier at the end of the table leaned forward, tapped the flat hand with his rake, and drew seven thousand-franc chips from under it. The woman's color flickered under her rouge, and the incident was closed—but Calthrop was out there. The chair he leaned on leaped back as the bald man flew up like a jack-in-the-box, shaking his fists and swearing in English. His blue spectacles fell on the table and broke. The croupier murmured one word, shoved over the woman's illicit thousands, and the man in front of Calthrop grabbed them and sat down. He was still trembling with a crazy, uncontrolled fury that shook his chair and jerked his hand till he could not pile his recovered chips. A reek of stale Scotch ascended to Calthrop's not inexperienced nose as he wished that woman or anybody else had swiped all the old wretch's money before he spoiled his luck. For the first time he moved sidewise and looked down at the bald man's face.

Elderly, clean-shaved, hard-lined, it struck him vaguely—half as being familiar and half as none too clean. Grime lay in its every wrinkle, darkest in the betraying parentheses from nose to chin, like old make-up; only Calthrop decided it was plain dirt. The spectacles he suddenly grabbed at and put on with half of one glass out as suddenly interested Mr. Calthrop. They were blue glass with very small eyepieces, a straight bar across the nose and straight ear-clips, and the bald man's incessant action with them was to snatch them off, end-for-end them, and put them on. It was a trick Calthrop had never seen before, and a nasty trick for any one playing behind him; but he was a nasty old man in every way and no concern of Calthrop's. His luck was killed and he might as well cash in. But as he turned away he stood still.

AT THE end of the table, beside a stolid bearded man, stood his unadmired friend of the pigeon-shooting, slight in his brown clothes. Involuntarily Mr. Calthrop once more bestowed meticulous attention on the parchment-finished face, the hazel eyes that roved absently over the face of creation with the effect of watching nothing and observing all things. Only they were not absent now. The hard core in them was black fire, the parchment-finished face the mask of a controlled devil intent on the bald man in the chair Calthrop had leaned over, playing with insanity now and swearing audibly.

"Mr. Scholl's secretary in a beautiful temper," Calthrop mused idly, "and—great Mike! Scholl himself, of course!" The half-familiar face he had looked down on flashed into his, labeled as he had seen it on the back of the *Daily Mail;* also the bald fact that if the pseudo-missing American millionaire had stayed missing it would have been no particular loss. He was a repulsive-looking old man, somehow, and—

Mr. Calthrop stepped back, and stayed back. The secretary had left the end of the table and was worming past his elbow to Scholl, the bearded man at his heels. That individual was silent. The secretary was not.

"Didn't I tell you to let play alone? You—"

He dropped his toneless voice as he bent over Mr. Scholl, but Calthrop had not ears for nothing. Not a syllable of the venomous and capable profanity was lost on him nor the furious authority of it. It occurred to him that Scholl's secretary was not merely clever: he had genius, to be able to address his employer in that way and keep on being employed; also that Jabez Scholl was a fool to curl up before him like a thrashed schoolboy; but what really held down his attention, without reason, was the millionaire's grime-lined face. He was absorbed, or he would have stepped back once more. The secretary had rooted Mr. Scholl from his chair with brute force disguised as solicitude and was dragging him from the table, the bearded man assisting on the off side, and the three of them barged full into Calthrop. That gentleman remained undisturbed. Also he was a deceptively built man, fifty pounds heavier than he looked. He stood. The secretary executed a flapping stumble on the polished floor, his parchment-finished face livid and his knuckles shining where he gripped himself erect by Mr. Scholl's arm.

"Get out of the way, will you?" he burst out, and stopped dead. Sudden recognition flicked into his eyes. "What, you again! You're not dancing today. I suppose the lady's too comfortable at the Hermitage with her duke—I hear she's staying the season! It was a good bluff, Luigi and her dancing; though I'd have thought even you'd have realized other people might guess her real job was with the other man!"

"I don't know what you mean," Calthrop answered, and knew he had been a fool.

The secretary grinned. "*Who* I mean! The man with Luigi: de Nevers-Outremont—château in Touraine—racehorses at Chantilly—house in Paris—good while he lasts. He doesn't usually fall for dancers, but you and the lady"—it was deliberate—"seem a pretty capable pair! Hope she sends you plenty of crumbs from her suite at the Hermitage!" He jerked his head that way insolently and passed on.

"WITH any luck I'll have it out of your skin yet for that," said Mr. Calthrop softly, and did not know why he was left so blackly angry nor so unpleasingly flat. He steadied sharply to what he did know. His strange girl's dancing had been no bluff; it was for Luigi and not for the man with him, duke or no duke; and if she had chosen to stay in Monte Carlo instead of leaving with Luigi it was no business of his—except that he could send her back her money. He had no desire to gamble for any more. The Scholl outfit had ruined the day for him from the instant the old misery himself had jerked his wrist and killed his luck. As he went to cash in his chips he saw the three of them seated on a retired green leather sofa, Mr. Scholl's Rockefeller figure in the middle. The secretary was still talking, his all-seeing eyes for once on the toes of his boots. Presently he rose and led his employer away, the bearded man at their heels.

It was without a blessing that Calthrop saw them get into a car outside the Casino and depart down the hill to their white yacht. Thanks to Scholl and his blue spectacles he had lost a thousand and odd francs and missed a coup of six thousand, besides being practically called a *souteneur;* but it was neither of those things which rankled as he sat in the front compartment of the little mountain railway to La Turbie and watched the climbing cogs click over into the rack. It was— Mr. Calthrop shut down on the thing in his head.

"No reason on earth that girl shouldn't be at the Hermitage with de Nevers-Outremont or any one else!" he informed himself profanely. "It's no affair of mine!" Yet it was, by Gad—now that he could pay her back her thousand francs! He knew perfectly that the parchment-finished secretary had lied about the dancing if he might possibly have told the truth about the silent black-eyed man who had left the Café de Paris behind Luigi and the girl; but he knew, too, as he turned his latchkey in the service door of the pink house, that he would get her name from Francine, send her her thousand francs, and shake off the dust of Monte Carlo and all its works—tonight!

But Francine was out. Crusts, left solitary in the kitchen, fell on Mr. Calthrop with the rapture demanded by a parting of hours; the sunset glow left the bedroom window over the front door the two of them were forbidden to use; dark fell like a lid, and Francine was still out. There was no leaving tonight now, even when she did come home and give him that girl's name: the last rack-and-pinion train went down at twenty past six—he would be lucky if tomorrow morning saw him in the Marseilles express. With the wholesomely cooling remembrance he advanced to shutter the dark oblong of his window over the front door, and happened to glance down. Below him the empty square was dim in the dusk, and against its darkness a man stood before the front door, his back to Calthrop. All that made his figure discernible was the lighted end of his cigar.

"Staring to hell for somebody!" Mr. Calthrop was out of temper. But it was his first sight of any inhabitant of the front of the house, if he could call it a sight; and reminded of the invalid and rightful tenant beyond the papered-over door he closed his shutters silently, lit two candles, and sat down to count his Casino money. He sat back staggered. Somehow his rough addition as he cashed in had not prepared him for the actual blazing amount that lay on his table: fifty-two thousand francs in big bills and little ones! The six thousand he had just failed to add would have— But, not being given to backing his horses down a trail, Mr. Calthrop jerked the lost money out of his head.

"Great Mike, I've about all that was coming to me! Train to Marseilles instead of my own flat feet; decent steamer passage; that girl's thousand, besides more money than I've met for years—and I don't know why I'm not having a joy-fit over it!" he reflected bleakly. It was nonsense that he could be worrying about a once-seen girl who had thrown a thousand francs at him; she was nothing to him except—

"That I'm damn' grateful I can pay her!" said Mr. Calthrop with firm finality. He thrust out his long legs in absent relief, and the cock-eyed table he sat at went over with a crash and the two brass candlesticks, which smote the bare floor like bombs and went out. Crusts, taken by surprise for once in his diplomatic life, leaped from the bed in the dark with one piercing bark as unostentatious as Gabriel's trumpet. Calthrop made a blind dive for his collar and knelt motionless on the floor and his scattered money. Let alone Crusts going off like high explosive, it had not been a plain noise he had made. It had been thundered to wake the dead.

"THE old gentleman next door!" he reflected with the grim calm of despair. Unless the old gentleman were out or paralyzed he would be round through the kitchen with a gun. Mr. Calthrop saw his finish and Francine's. All things considered, it was as well he was going tomorrow; some luck would even attend him if he were not going tonight. Where he knelt silent in the dark, gripping the cinnamon dog, he was thankfully aware that as yet the other part of the pink house was more unexpectedly silent still; dead, heavy silent, like the grave. "Praise be!" he breathed, and was too quick. From behind the papered-over door, at his elbow, came a furious screaming groan.

"Here, you there with the dog! Quick!"

Mutely, Mr. Calthrop swore. He had no doubt now about his own personal finish, whatever happened to Francine, but there was no sense in giving himself away any more than he had to. He muffled the cinnamon dog's head in his coat and waited. The screaming groan came again, continued in a regular, desperate repetition, but he hoped he had been mistaken about the words: they were not repeated. All the same the old gentleman who thought he had all the house seemed to take noises hard. If he were going to groan like that all night there might be point even in being discovered and kicked out; except for getting Francine the devil's own calling down later, or—

"Now, probably, if she's in!" Mr. Calthrop's knee joints stiffened. Behind the papered-over door was a man's step entering the old gentleman's room; a man's voice. The voice was low, stolid; but the hard core leaped into the listener's eyes.

"I'm here," was all he heard, but the newcomer might have startled the old gentleman, for the groaning stopped in something very like a yelp. The invalid made no other answer that Calthrop could hear. What he did hear was that the man who had entered the other room went out, and shut the door behind him. He bit a thoughtful lip.

"H'm! That was the friend, evidently." The old man had apparently not mentioned dogs nor noises to him, but that was not saying he never would: unless he had been asleep and thought he dreamt them. While he was dead-quiet and alone was no time to be reminding him of them: Mr. Calthrop knew better than to move. But in the old gentleman's welcome and unexpected silence about dogs he let his muscles relax, and nearly fell over with Crusts' scrabbling leap in his arms toward the long agonized squeak of a dying rat from behind the papered-over door.

"Ee-ee-ee," he had not known that the partition was so thin. "*E-e-e-e!*" the rat screamed at his very elbow. Only was it a rat—or the old gentleman? Calthrop, clutching the wild struggles of the cinnamon dog leaping for the prey behind the door, was suddenly uncertain. The squeak was like a rat; he was not honestly sure it was not a real rat, unless the old gentleman could be crazy! Whichever it was, the secretly let bedroom was no place for an enterprising and surreptitious dog with sporting tastes. Mr. Calthrop moved softly to rise—and at his very ear the rat squeaked again, scrabbling along the wall in a dying flurry; only this time he knew it was no rat!

In the dark he grabbed up his scattered paper money and slid out into the kitchen with the scandalized Crusts in furious wriggle under his arm, softly closed his bedroom door, and stood. Whether the old gentleman had spoken or not, somebody, probably the friend, was coming to investigate. Opposite him in the dark the kitchen door was opening, shutting on some one standing motionless, listening. In the sudden spurt of a struck match Calthrop grinned.

"Great Mike, Francine! I thought you were—" he began, and changed his mimd. There was no sense in worrying her with upset tables and discovery unless judgment descended on them. "I say, have you rats in this house? Or does your old-gentleman tenant often give way to groans and squeaks?"

FRANCINE did what people mean when they say they nearly jump out of their skin. He heard the light sound as her match dropped and went out.

"Rats! Heavens, but you startled me there in the dark! No! I— What did you say? The old gentleman—was he groaning?"

"Um! Squeaking like a dying rat, too, if you haven't been poisoning any real ones. He nearly had Crusts crazy."

The cinnamon dog licked his face apologetically and he put him down. But Francine stood motionless in the dark.

"For heaven's sake, monsieur, you did not say you were there? They—they could justly ruin me if they found out I had deceived them. The old gentleman—why was he groaning?"

"I didn't speak to him"—dryly. "But he sounded peeved. Isn't there any one to grease his wheels or anything?"

Francine struck a fresh match, lit the lamp, took off her jacket and arranged the stove; she also arranged a curiously complicated mind. Then she turned.

"There is every one, naturally! He is rich; the friend with him is a doctor; he has a servant. But you understand—well, that business needs patience as well as nursing! I do all that is possible with my cooking, but he never eats, and for my part I would say they had taken him too late. What I see of him as I pass his bedroom door with my trays looks— My opinion is that the doctor believes he will die!"

"Pleasant for you! Aren't deaths rather a fuss here?"

"He will not die here," Francine's back was turned. She put down a heavy saucepan with a bang. "If he gets no better the doctor moves him to the hospital at Monaco, since the quiet and good air have only made him worse; he never leaves him even for one hour. His son is expected in Monte Carlo tonight, the servant told me; I met him this afternoon going down to see if he had arrived. But if the old man has been allowed to get drinking again and making those noises, it is a shame!"

The screaming groan through the papered-over door had not struck Calthrop as particularly alcoholic, and as for the rat—

"I don't know why he'd squeak like a rat, either," he mused.

For a moment he listened, but the squeaking had stopped, or else it did not penetrate to the kitchen. In the silence Crusts thoughtfully approached the shut bedroom door with his ears cocked. "Come here, you old fool!" said his master hastily. One bark was enough for one night, and now, while there were still no consequences from it, might be his only chance to get at his own business.

"Look here, Francine," he began, "Mademoiselle—" For once in his life he boggled. How on earth was he to get his dancing girl's address in Monte Carlo or anywhere else without letting out he did not know her name! "I mean, Mademoiselle—"

Francine cut the words out of his mouth. "I heard from Mademoiselle today—in Paris."

"Paris!" Mr. Calthrop might have started; he certainly stepped back. "You're sure?"

"Well, I had the letter from her"—unemotionally. "Monsieur knew she went to Paris—together with Monsieur Luigi."

"Monsieur heard today she was down at the Hermitage Hotel in Monte Carlo—*not* with Monsieur Luigi!"

"Who with, then?"

Mr. Calthrop flushed a rich bronze. "Don't remember."

"Gr-r," said Francine comprehendingly.

"If you heard that you heard a lie! All Mademoiselle cares for in this world is her dancing; and she has not to condescend to staying with men at hotels to succeed in it. She— Who told you?"

"Nobody." He turned for a smelly sulphur match. "A man who doesn't admire me."

"Exactly." She regarded the back of his smooth black head not without compassion "Speaking with respect, you are soft, for all you look hard! He would say that, then, to annoy you. Mademoiselle is in Paris, she sails shortly for America with Monsieur Luigi and his ballet, and when I get rid of this delirium tremens old gentleman who groans in my house, I am to let it and follow her to America to make the ménage for her in her apartment."

"Yes? How nice!"

THE sudden hard core showed in Mr. Calthrop's eyes. If he had only hoped that the parchment-finished man lied about de Nevers-Outremont he knew Francine lied now about Paris. Why both should go to the expense of invention on his account beat him; the dancing girl was no business of his. It might have been by accident that his hard stare stayed on the cigaret he was lighting. Francine fell bodily into the snare of his silky voice.

"Monte Carlo!" She sniffed unnecessarily. "See, this very day I had a letter from her, and I have been out now to send an answer back—to Mademoiselle Rose-Rose, Hôtel Crillon, Paris. Does that look like Monte Carlo? Bah! Go down to the Hermitage and ask there for Mademoiselle Rose-Rose, if you do not believe me!"

Rose-Rose! So that was her name. It was simple when you knew it—like paying her money back, when you had it to pay. He bent over his cigarette that did not draw.

"It is the name she dances under." This time Francine spoke the truth. "Did you not know?"

Mr. Calthrop shook his lowered head. There was no occasion to say he did not even know the color of her hair, or anything about her but one sight of her and her handwriting and her money that had given him a fresh start as his crusts had given one to the cinnamon dog; he left out the trick she had played him in the Café de Paris. But all the same he would find out why Francine had been lying. "How did you get to know her?" he drawled.

Francine hunched, infinitesimally. "She came here—as you did. I was poor then, my man was dead in the war, I had only this house and no lodgers; and Mademoiselle stayed. She learned most of her dancing here."

"Here?"

"Just here. Oh, she had been drilled in schools; I do not mean that! But her own dancing, her—what you call the soul of her dancing, she learned here. If that sick old monkey on the other side of my house would go I would show you the salon as Mademoiselle had it; all empty for her to dance in, in her little silk chemise before the big mirror and me. Oh, we suggested great effects to her—the big mirror and me!"

"Without music?"

"Oh, there was music! A blind boy, very clever, who was first violin with Virot before the war took his eyes. It was as well, you see! Mademoiselle in a silk chemise and not that sometimes." She raised a businesslike eyebrow. "But it was also great charity to the blind boy. He does well elsewhere now—Mademoiselle sees to that!"

"She must waste some money, going about throwing crusts to fool people," was Mr. Calthrop's unworthy comment.

"She has no money"—calmly—"except what she makes; at times she is on the verge of nothing. But for people—she does not care at all for people! Me, I am her servant and a kind of friend; the blind boy, he was useful; you—naturally, I do not know, but I should say not. Men, love, fine clothes—Rose-Rose brushes them out of her way like so many spiders. Her day is to dance, and then dance, and when she is tired lie down on her bed and read, read; rolled up in a red velvet cloak resting she is Rose-Rose indeed. But for women's affairs she cares nothing!"

"She wears good clothes, all the same." Mr. Calthrop was dry.

"On occasions—of course! It is her business. Otherwise, it is as I say. Monsieur's dinner is ready, if he will sit down; also the Cr-roosts! Later I will take in the pig-mannered doctor's and the old gentleman's that he never eats; I wait till they ring. If they should move unexpectedly for his health, by the way, you understand there is no hurry for you to go. It will take me some time to let my house and get ready to follow Mademoiselle!"

"I'm going myself first, Francine." It was luck he and Crusts had not been evicted before he knew it was Rose-Rose—he left out the Paris address; but if he had meant to warn Francine about the upset table and the old gentleman's yelp through her papered-over door he forgot it. "Going tomorrow, probably!"

But Francine was busy and took no notice.

MR. CALTHROP absorbed his dinner, deep in thought. Crusts ate, also deep in thought, and retired diplomatically under the stove as Francine went in and out of the front of the house with trays from soup to coffee, and Calthrop forgot him; Francine disappeared through the back hall to the roost above the kitchen where she nightly barred herself in—with odd care, if Calthrop had ever listened to it—and he still forgot him. He had a letter to write to that girl who cared for nothing but her dancing and who, whether in Paris or in Monte Carlo, was no business of his. He fished out Francine's meager store of letter paper, her pin-point pen, and brought up with a jerk.

"Hang the money!" he drawled, with a sudden idiotic distaste for his winnings. If the walking had been good to Marseilles and across the Atlantic he would have shoved all the bills into an envelope and dispatched it to a girl who had no money but what she earned, and chucked that round till she needed to have Francine lie about her and— Once more he brought up with a jerk. Staring down at the kitchen table, he abandoned the letter she would have no more desire to receive from him than from the blind boy who had played for her, wrote four words on a sheet of paper that enclosed a thousand-franc note and just half the money he had won on it, and paused. Slowly, and going softly with the pin-point pen, he block-lettered "Rose-Rose" on an envelope Francine could finish addressing and post; it was easy enough for him to have forgotten the address—though why he cared enough to save his face over a girl who was still in Monte Carlo with or without de Nevers-Outremont was beyond him! He slipped the sealed envelope into his pocket, realized abruptly that it was midnight, glanced behind the stove to arouse the silent Crusts to adjourn to bed, and jumped to his feet. The cinnamon dog was not there! Neither, on research, was he in Calthrop's bedroom; Francine would have about as much use for a scorpion in her attic as for a dog; and the only other place where he could be was—

"That rat!" muttered Mr. Calthrop. "Hang the dog!" He stood in his chopped-off bedroom listening.

There was no sound from the front of the house, but that said nothing. Knowing the cinnamon dog, he knew that calm and persistence had him under the old gentleman's bed by now and that with the first rat squeak he would be upon it with the blandly genial effect of a leopard from a convenient jungle. After which—

"Great Mike!" Mr. Calthrop was really roused. Somebody might brain the dog, let alone bursting in on him through the kitchen to raise Cain. Under other circumstances he would merely have invaded the front tenants' and demanded his dog, but— "There's Francine—can't do it!" For one second he considered slitting open the papered-over door, but it would be more productive in effect—and trouble—than a sudden dog on an old gentleman's chest. The only other way was—

In one neat moment he extinguished the light, slipped out of his shoes and crossed the kitchen. Outside, in the dark passage at the foot of Francine's attic stair, was silence, and before his groping fingers a shut baize door. At his touch it swung forward noiselessly into an empty, unlit, red-tiled hall, made visible by the open door of a lighted room at his left hand. It was merely the emptiness of the passage that took Mr. Calthrop's attention. He shifted noiselessly to the open-door side of it. But, reconnoitered through the hinge crack, the room was empty, too; very bare, very large, and furnished chiefly by a tall mirror filling one end of it from ceiling to floor.

"THAT girl's dancing room," he thought. The mirror gloomed at him as mirrors do gloom in an empty room at night, reflected a table, some chairs, and no living thing; especially no cinnamon dog. But Mr. Calthrop had not expected it would. Past the upright oblong of light from his open doorway the tiled hall ran away from him to the front of the house and the dim head of a dim stair running down to the front door on the desolate square under his bedroom window. Furniture there was none, except—

There was, though! That black patch on the right, that looked like a seven-foot-square picture standing on the floor, was a painted cabinet sticking out a foot from the wall! Close up in the lee of it Calthrop heard the night silence of the house as he stood, but not so much as a cat's ear could have heard his silence as he ceased to stand, moving forward flat-footed with the arches of his insteps put to their proper use as pneumatic tires. The door to his right front was simple: it was half open on the old gentleman's room with the papered-over door between it and his own. The left door opposite was likely the friend's.

Mr. Calthrop smiled. It was not the first time he had negotiated a silent passage between two lighted doorways, and this was easier than a German prison. Backed against the wall this side of the left-hand door, he was not likely to be seen—he had a sudden subconscious conviction he was doing no sleeping—and he himself could see well enough through the right-hand door the very ordinary sight of an oldish man lying in bed. On a small table beside him a green-shaded candle left his face indistinguishable except for the dull pools of what looked like blue spectacles, patchy gray whiskers and beard, and an impression that his jaws were working incessantly as if he were chewing gum; but Calthrop was not concerned with his face nor his occupation. On the bed, facing the door and with something pouched in his cheek, was the cinnamon dog.

Mr. Calthrop eyed him in silence. Crusts returned the gaze, crept off the bed with capable stealth, emerged into the passage and was scooped up. The dull pools of the old gentleman's spectacles never flickered and he took no notice of the departure of the dog. His jaw continued to work; otherwise he remained unmoved. Calthrop collected himself to retreat, and an undesirable sound of life halted him in the empty passage. It was a low sound, but it was sharp, like some one letting out a wordless breath of ungovernable surprise and imprecation. Calthrop's glance raked the hall; but there was no one to be seen; there was only a sense of some one, somewhere, listening. If he had hunted down the sound he would have been the better for it: instead he made the mistake of the evening. He stood easily, as if he were at home, against the left-hand wall of the red-tiled hall of the other tenants.

"Bones of my heart!" In her dark service passage Francine cursed with shut lips. Ashen with rage and fear, she closed the baize door the indiscernible crack that had opened on Calthrop standing easily in the front of the house as if he belonged there. "Bones of my heart, *him!*"

She was not so hand-clever as Calthrop: if she had meant to bolt the baize door her shaking fingers did not send the bolt home. But the faint closing of it never reached him any more than the remembrance of her.

"THE servant," was what he thought. "The devil knows where he is, too!"

The plain fact was that he had forgotten him. He trusted he was wrong about the listening and that quick breath; that the unseen servant was merely snoring, and not observing him from some dark dog-hole adjacent to the old gentleman's door; but he had no idea of waiting to see. On burglar's feet he gained the farther end of the painted cabinet and stopped once more in the lee of it. There was a breathing sound now, without any listening, that turned to a puttering thrum; and suddenly he would have laughed out if he had dared.

"Motor with the pip! Coming up from Monte Carlo. Going round the hairpin turn to Mont Agel or—" But instead of using the moment to get out he listened. The motor was not coming to the old gentleman's front door, anyway; it had stopped, somewhere down by the hairpin turn. He decided he had been wrong about the servant, too; there was nobody coming and there was only the empty room with the mirror for a dog-catcher to pass before the baize door opened on inconspicuous safety. Mr. Calthrop slid an unwittingly caressing hand round Crusts' nose and was abruptly aware of that small object pouched in his cheek. It was not a bone. It was—

"What the mischief?" He frowned and dexterously removed it. It was bad enough to have to burgle a dog to save Francine's skin with her measly tenants, but to have that dog burgle, too, was the limit. If he had grabbed anything there was going to be a hue and cry for in the morning it had to be dropped now, this side of the baize door. The damp lump in his hand felt reassuringly like a mere wad of waste paper, but it was an odd kind of paper, too. Mr. Calthrop suddenly and unreasonably registered trouble. It felt like:—if it were like what he thought it was like it could not be deposited on the hall floor quick enough, unless he wanted to be run in before he left Monte Carlo! He stooped instantaneously, and as instantaneously straightened up. It was a fool's trick to lay the thing down before he knew what it was. Very softly he undid the hard-folded paper, leaned forward from behind his cabinet till the oblong of light from the mirror room was useful, and glanced at Crusts' prize.

"Banca Commerciale Italiana Napoli," met his eyes; then illegible Italian writing, a great deal of it. But the thing was not the check he had imagined; it was a bank receipt.

The fabulous amount of deposited lire in the right-hand corner for which it was a receipt staggered Calthrop. He leaned more forward still into the light, staring incredulously at a sum his mind refused to formulate. It was millions, anyhow, that danced before him on a stamped and engraved bank receipt; but the name of the depositor scratched on the top line under the staggering figures might have been anything. It looked like a German name, unless it was English; it was not readable either way. He turned the deposit receipt over in his hand.

"Great Mike, drink! This isn't drink—this is absolutely crazy! What'll I do with the thing? Why, the old gentleman—" He stared at the ten words scrawled on the back of the slip; the ink run where Crusts had slobbered it. "Well, I'm damned!"

Motionless, full in the light from the mirror room doorway, his paralyzed figure sharp-cut against it, faced to the baize door, he stared once more at the fabulous bank receipt. What kept the skin of his back whole was Crusts. Silent, with lifted hackles, the cinnamon dog went rigid under his arm.

TOO quickly, all but soundlessly, a man was mounting the stone stairs from the front door.

The dog-burglar recollected, blankly, the old gentleman's expected son. It was either he or the elusive servant, but Mr. Calthrop knew better than even to turn the tail of his eye backward. Lightning never sidestepped the sky with more instantaneous effect than he into the foot-wide shelter of the painted cabinet. Neither did he dare crane forward to observe events. With his crazy bank receipt and his cinnamon dog grasped gently to him he stood pat against his end of the cabinet, waiting for whichever it was of Francine's tenants beyond the other end to go into he did not care which room. At that instant and not before, he could cross the ten feet of red tiling to the baize door and disappear behind it. But no one went into any room. Instead the old gentleman's friend—it had been a correct idea that he was not asleep—emerged from his on the newcomer.

"Where the devil—" said he. "Oh, thought you were Daniels! What's he playing at? He was out—out!—when I came in! Know where he is?"

"Still out." It was a level voice, anybody's voice. "Dead out! Condamine Hill this afternoon—under a tram!"

"Why in hell—"

"Was he down there? I don't know. I know why he isn't coming back. Come inside somewhere, Strachey; we've got to settle this up!"

Suddenly and very gently Mr. Calthrop shrank within himself.

This was no son, as he understood sons! He stopped breathing and flattened still closer behind the meager jut of his cabinet. The two men in the hall were moving forward; passing him toward the mirror room.

The dog-catcher took no ostentatious notice of them. His face pressed into the cabinet, his dark, near-threadbare clothes blotted into it, he let them go by, glanced sidewise with the tail of one capable eye and immediately closed it on a totally unexpected sight. The offside man passing him was the stolid bearded individual he had seen leaving the Casino that afternoon with Mr. Jabez Scholl; the near one—young, pale and parchment-finished—whose absent eyes were turned on the open door of the mirror room with the effect of seeing nothing and yet registering the very grain of the threshold, was Jabez Scholl's secretary.

To Mr. Calthrop casual night-running after a dog in another man's house suddenly assumed another aspect. It was no moment to consider what had brought the secretary to the pink house nor even that by the blessing of Heaven his eyes for once were not looking straight before him, but merely that he was the last man on earth he wished to be seen by and that there would be just one instant when he could hope to get away without being seen. The instant the tall mirror in the opposite room reflected the hall to those absent-looking eyes would be too late.

The bearded man was comparatively negligible. He was staring down at his own boots as he walked.

They were not Mr. Calthrop's first thoughts, but they were the only ones he dared think. As the bearded man crossed the mirror room threshold still looking down and Jabez Scholl's parchment-finished secretary wheeled to the right to follow him Calthrop's stocking feet wheeled left, to Francine's service entrance. Unseen and unheard, with outlying portions of cinnamon dog sticking out from under his arm, he passed within three feet of the secretary's shoulder in the one second that the impossible was possible, slid through the forward swing of the baize door, and went slack in Francine's passage with a faint dampness on his upper lip. It had been a near thing; not one he wanted to repeat. For the moment all Mr. Calthrop cared for was that it was over. He heard the door of the mirror room shut, definitely, with a latch that clicked home.

Irrelevantly, the everyday sound galvanized him: the thought he had not dared think leaped bodily in his head. It was not a thought, either: it was the mere bald memory of the Casino lights over the unsuitably dark wrinkles on the unpleasing face of Mr. Jabez Scholl. Yet, suddenly and silently, Calthrop swore.

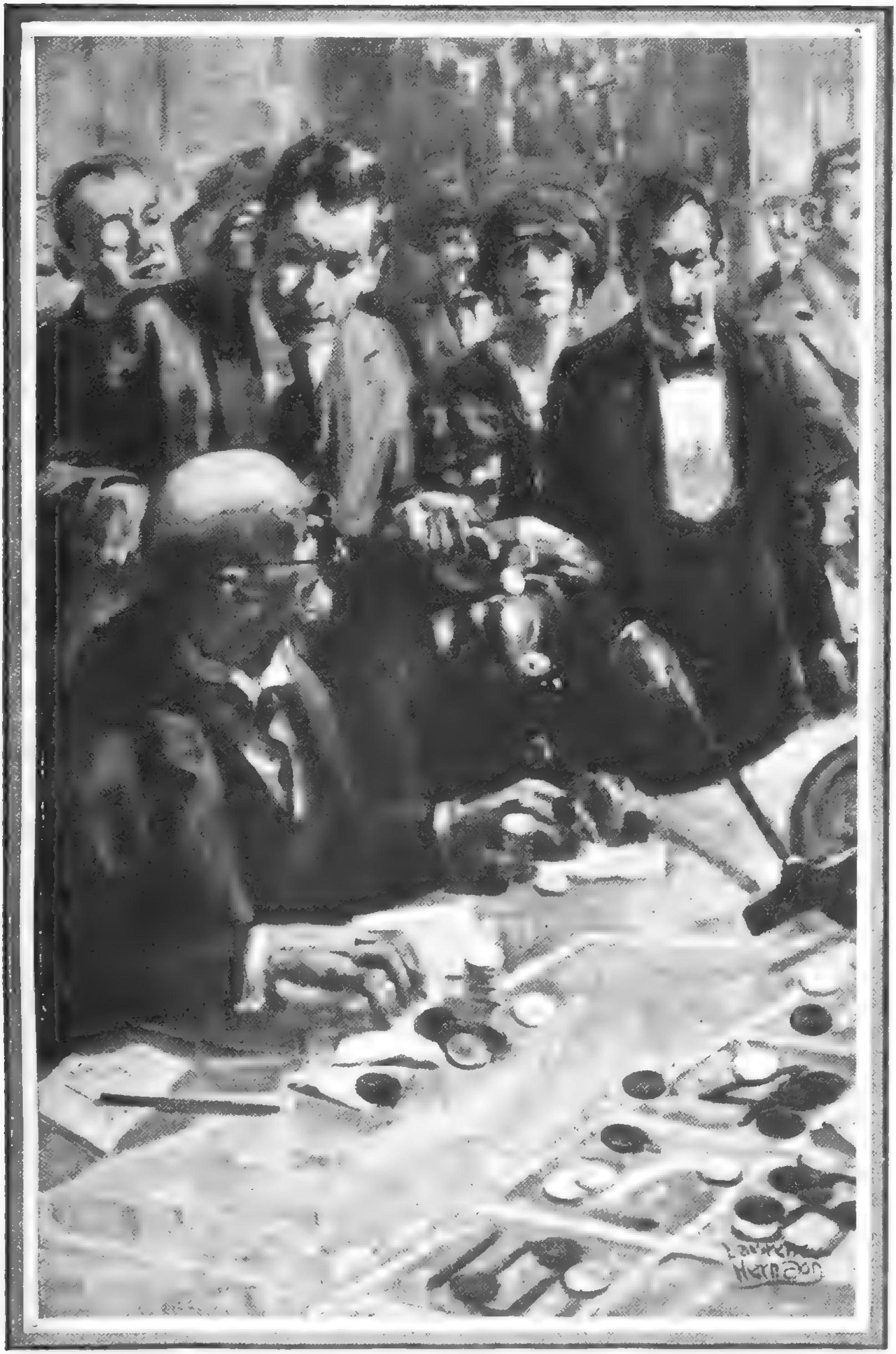
"Gad! I don't believe it was him!" It was nonsense and he knew it; yet he added to it the presence of Scholl's secretary in the pink house. The total was crazy, of course. Only, if it happened to be otherwise—

"There would be some guts to it," he gasped inelegantly. "I've had enough of that secretary following me round like a tin can on a dog's tail and telling lies about a girl." It was unreasonable after his decision long ago that she was none of his business for sudden temper to light his hazel eyes to awl points. "I'd be even with him for that anyhow, and a bit over. And by Gad, if I am going to be it's now—while he's in that room!"

HE MADE no move to go there nor even to push forward the baize door for a keyhole gauge of the business inside it. Instead, he bolted it; shut Crusts into Francine's kitchen, and himself into his microscopic bedroom; lit a candle with one hand and with the other snatched an old newspaper out of the bottom of his gaping bag. If something he saw in it should have shaken him it did not. He had enough to begin on—he transferred his glance to the papered-over door that concealed his existence from some of Francine's tenants anyhow, if he could no longer count the old gentleman in bed; if he had enough to finish on, the parchment-faced man was in his hand. "It's a gay life, a burglar's," murmured Mr. Calthrop, "except for having to hustle. I expect I can't be too quick finding out what's behind this door!"

He was more than quick. The run of his knife round it made a clean slit and a happy discovery: there was no papered-over business on the reverse side of it to leave a raw slit and a give-away, and it opened toward him with no lock to take time or picking. Yet suddenly, with every need for haste, Mr. Calthrop paused. What his backward glance fell on was merely the derelict newspaper on his floor. He reached for it, shut the jaws of his bag on it, and went through the papered-over door.

The other side was a shallow, two-foot clothes cupboard, lit faintly from its other door that stood ajar on the old gentleman's room, and satisfactory. Wood-lined, groove and tongue, it showed no trace of a second door: once its unsuspected back



As Calthrop's twelve hundred francs left his fingers, the baldheaded man had flung up an unexpected hand and caught his wrist sharply.

opening was closed there would remain no sign of it or any one who might have had sudden reason to disappear by it. It was empty, except for an overcoat and trousers in a heap on the floor. Mr. Calthrop moved sidewise without sound. He was a qualified fool to be in here chasing soap bubbles—unless he was not! He leaned to the inch-wide door crack and stood still.

THE mirror room contingent had not arrived; the room before him was empty except for the old man who had squealed into the cupboard like a dying rat. He sat up in bed within arm-reach, huddled in a red flannel dressing-gown that hung loose on his bony body, his blue glasses staring straight before him at nothing, his claws of hands motionless on Francine's best bed-quilt. His hard jaws were chewing as a sick wolf chews, his lips blood-cracked, his face fungous with patches of gray beard; the face of a stranger except—

There arose in Mr. Calthrop a fierce nausea and a fresh memory of this afternoon's unpleasing millionaire playing the wheel, unsuitably and grimily wrinkled for a man so newly shaved, and the other man who had led him away.

"That secretary!" The nausea left Mr. Calthrop. "Unless this old rat-squeaker loses his head and yelps out at me here's where I flatten out that secretary's tin can!"

For business reasons the hard core in his eyes gave place to their usual softly pleasant gaze, yet the whole of Mr. Calthrop was suddenly about as safe to encounter as a hidden leopard. He moved. The cupboard door swayed an inch farther back from the bed outside. Round the edge of the lintel came the dull paper of the crazy bank receipt and half a hand. They hovered within range of the old gentleman's blue glasses. Mr. Calthrop's carefully muted voice said ten words:

"'You with the dog, quick. Help. It's worth your while.'" He repeated the ink-run message on the back of a deposit receipt that had paralyzed him in the red-tiled hall. "I got your note, if I get you right. Don't speak—I'm the dog man!" He moved forward into plain sight, the quarter-open cupboard door between him and the hall beyond. "Steady, steady, Mr. Scholl!"

For the man in the bed had jerked his head round. There looked up at him—desperate, unshaven, but clean-wrinkled—the Rockefeller countenance of the real Jabez Scholl.

The exciting conclusion of this novel of villainy and romance, with the dancing girl again strongly in evidence, will appear in October EVERYBODY'S—out September 15.

Sea Ghosts

By Edgar Daniel Kramer

OVER the waters
  The pale mists creep,
Souls of the sailors
  The cold waves keep.

Up from the waters
  And over the quay
Ghosts come back
  To reality.

Over the flags
  Of the winding street
They steal along
  On silent feet.

In olden ways
  They walk once more;
With fumbling fingers
  They try each door.

We sit by the hearth
  In the candlelight;
"There are tears," we say,
  "In the wind tonight!"

A Novelette Complete in This Issue

A Runner-up *for* Providence

The Fairy Story of an Ugly Duckling Whose Mother Couldn't Get Rid of Her in the Marriage Mart

By Michael J. Phillips

Illustration by Joseph A. Maturo

"READY, girls?"

The orchestra at the Bel-Air, the great winter resort hotel at San Ilisario, California, had already squawked and wailed through two numbers when Mrs. Baldwin Brown entered the room which her daughters occupied.

In accordance with the Bel-Air custom they had dined in sport clothes, then hurried upstairs to change to elaborate evening wear for the dance in the Pekingese ballroom. It was all part of the sacred ritual which the guests at San Ilisario imposed upon themselves by way of entertainment.

No woman thought of questioning the ritual or rebelling against it. The men grumbled but obeyed it. Even Baldwin Brown, manganese steel magnate of Ellensville, Illinois, had ceased to balk at a custom which required him to doff his conservative business suit between six and seven for knickered tweeds, and to switch from tweeds to dinner clothes between eight and nine—after dinner.

As she asked the question Mrs. Brown wondered again, resignedly, how she had come to be burdened with two daughters so unattractive. She had had beaux in plenty in her own younger days, for she had been pretty and charming.

But her daughters were ugly ducklings who could never turn into swans, she knew. Maude, the elder, was too tall. She was colorless, commonplace and indolent. With only occasional flashes of resentment and rebellion she was content to drift, an empty bark in social waters, a cipher in matrimonial calculations.

Berneice, the younger, was a sorer trial to her mother. She had possibilities which rendered her unattractiveness the more marked. She had a good figure but a muddy complexion. Her eyes were dark blue, large and expressive. And she had brains. Her face, however, was hopelessly spoiled by two features, her nose and her teeth.

The nose started classically and ended in a caricature. It was delicate and well modeled for two-thirds of its distance. But the lower third ruined its owner irretrievably. Its sharp point projected upward. The result could not be glossed over by calling the member anything so harmless as a pug nose. A pug indicates piquancy.

Berneice's nose was of the sort with which the principal clown in the circus adorns himself so as to rouse derisive laughter even before he begins to cut capers. And, as if Nature had not been sufficiently unkind, she had equipped the girl with two projecting upper front teeth. They could not be covered by the lips in repose. They were not wide enough to be called shovel-teeth. Yet they did, somehow, resemble long, narrow spade-blades.

"Ready?" repeated Mrs. Brown, smothering a sigh.

Maude, listless in an unbecoming and

very dowdy Alice-blue satin, turned from the long window. She had been looking out into the palm-strewn, electric-lighted grounds at the procession of motor-cars which rolled up the curving drive from Ocean Boulevard to deposit guests at the main entrance.

Berneice was at the dressing-table, discontentedly applying a powder-puff. Her old-rose chiffon showed taste and originality. Her pale-brown hair was well arranged. But her skin was dull under the powder.

As she rose from the low chair she lifted a book from the table. "Ready, mother," she replied.

Maude, hesitant, turned from the window and, with a sidewise glance at her mother, picked up a magazine from her bed.

Mrs. Brown looked from one to the other and her gaze included significantly the reading matter. "We're going to the ballroom," she said sweetly, though there was intangible reproof in her manner. With her clear, fine-textured skin, her patrician profile, her black velvet gown and her string of pearls she seemed to be offering herself as a model for her daughters. It was a model they could not possibly hope to approximate.

"I know we're going to the ballroom," replied Berneice calmly, though a little red appeared in her cheeks. She held the book firmly against her side.

"But, my dear child," remonstrated Mrs. Brown, the sweetness becoming slightly acid, "one doesn't read in a ballroom; one doesn't go to a ballroom to read. There's the lounge and one's own room for that sort of thing. You're there to dance."

"We will not dance twice the whole evening," returned Berneice, still quietly, but with an undercurrent of bitterness. "With something to read we have an alibi."

Mrs. Brown stood hesitant.

THE resort hotels are filled, each winter, with pathetic pilgrims. Mothers, back East, discover that the home-town boys are somehow passing their daughters by for other girls more frivolous, more flirtatious, and more frilly. Less worthy, undoubtedly, with fewer solid virtues; but with redder lips and brighter eyes, with more of a come-hither in them.

This, despite the fact that the parents of the unattractive girls have in many cases amassed a solid competence or a downright fortune. When the discovery is made, the mother prepares for the great gamble. She feels that the hills are green far away; that in California there will be eligible young men who will find the daughter desirable against a background of new gowns, lovely landscapes and the gaiety of the big hotels.

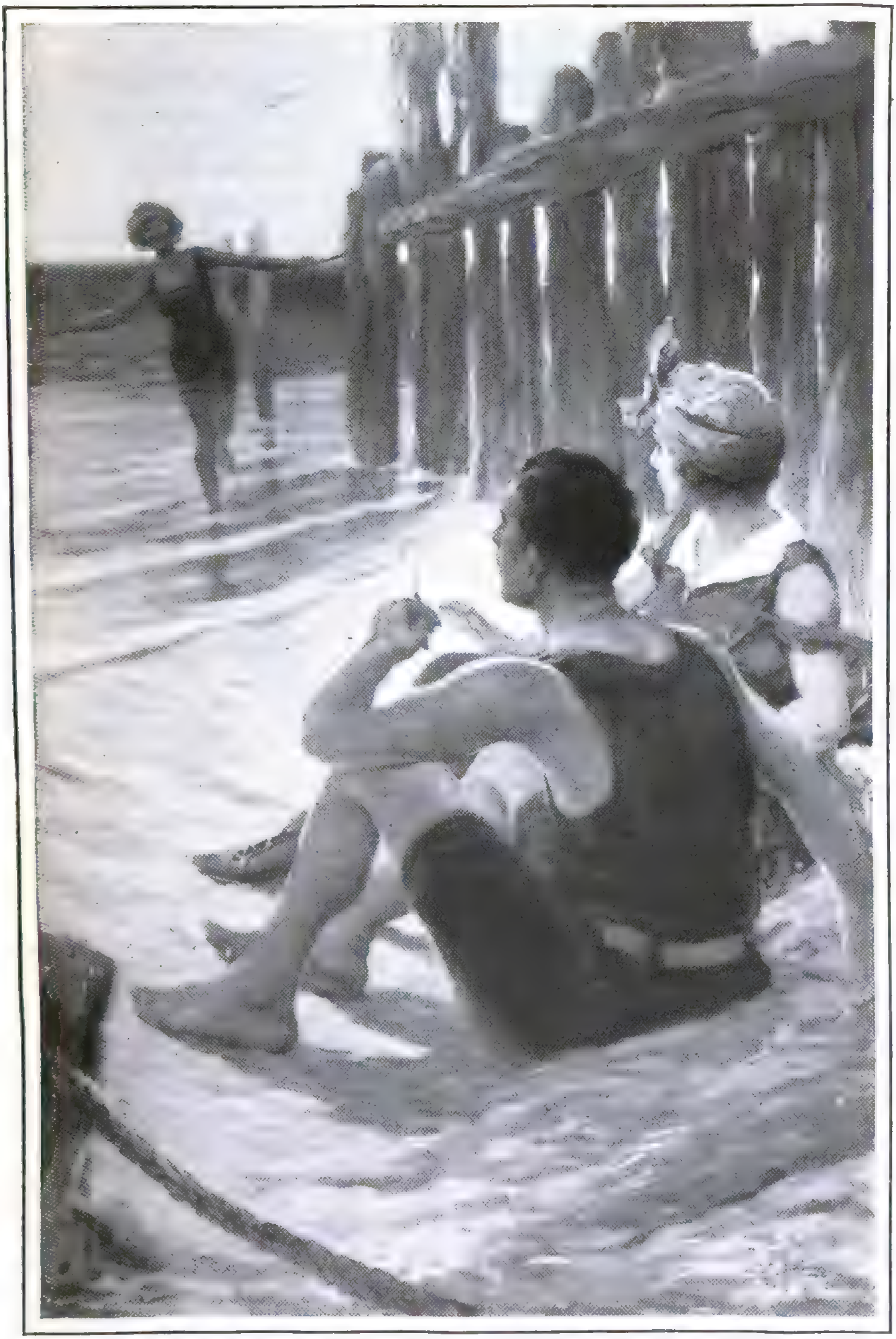
But when California is reached the competition is found to be keener than it is at home. Each hotel is an eddy that attracts anxious parents and homely daughters, so that the percentage of undesired marriageable females is actually greater to the population than it is at home. The parents with the daughters in tow circle aimlessly and defeatedly in the eddy.

After a time they escape from it to another eddy which has the advantage of being larger, or smaller, as the case may be. And thus it goes—Monterey, Del Monte, Santa Barbara, San Ilisario, Los Angeles Pasadena, Riverside, Coronado, until all the eddies have been exhausted, spring has come —and the daughters are still unmarried.

The daughters themselves are divided into two classes: the plucky ones and those with a modicum of good looks and charm; and the more easily discouraged and the less attractive.

The girls of the first class throw themselves into various gaieties, doing the correct thing at the correct time: tennis, golf, bathing, riding, motoring. Thus they hope to make, and sometimes succeed in making, acquaintances which lighten the tedium of the quest. They enter the hotel ballroom chatting animatedly and smiling brightly. Chatter and smile persist throughout the evening, though dances are few. But they keep up the fiction that they are having a wonderful time.

The girls of the second class start as do those of the first. But lack of encouragement or lack of pluck silences the chatter and dims the smile. The ballroom becomes a place of trial, an inquisition chamber which they loathe and dread but which they cannot escape. "Every one" goes to the evening hop, so every one must go. Although the hope that springs eternal is always strangled anew, nevertheless there is the melancholy pleasure of watching the more fortunate ones dance; of studying clothes and commenting on them; and of hearing the provocative strains of music produced by a good orchestra.



"Hello, Garrick! So here's where you've been keeping yourself, old stingy!" She gave Berneice a swift glance and a nonchalant "Hello."

To salve their pride and save their faces, those watchers at the feast who seldom if ever partake must have occupation and excuse for their presence. So there has grown up the custom among the hopelessly plain of taking books and magazines to the ballroom. Between dances they read in an engrossed fashion, indicating with pathetic significance that they have no hope of being chosen. But during the dance they watch avidly and make low-toned comment.

The literary refuge, while it is a confession of defeat, is also a balm. It is a sign of little expectation. And those who do not expect much cannot be greatly disappointed.

That is, it is a balm to some natures. But it was not to Mrs. Brown. She was a fighter who believed in facing the enemy and striking back. The submissiveness of the daughters to the inevitable was humiliating to her. It would have been more pitiable had she ever been forced to a similar subterfuge in her own girlhood. Now she spoke impatiently:

"Nonsense, Berneice! Don't be silly. Of course you will dance, if you give people a chance to ask you. But if you're buried in a book—"

"They have had chances before and they haven't asked me," replied Berneice, with terrifying candor, though her blue eyes were clouded with the pain which the confession cost her. "Why sit there looking as though you expect some one to ask you, when really you don't?"

Mrs. Brown shook her marcelled head, partly in exasperation, and partly to dislodge the unpleasant conviction that the girl was speaking logic.

"My dear child, we don't know many people here yet. The hostess will introduce young men. That's one of her duties."

"Oh, the hostess!" said Berneice, with faint contempt, and stopped.

They had been in four resorts, and to the mind of each sprang a composite but clear-cut picture of the western resort-hotel hostess. The picture was of a fading woman of a certain age, harassed under her professional aren't-we-having-a-good-time air. She was ineffective despite her assumption of bright capableness. The bridge parties, the Mah Jong tournaments, the picnics and the rides which she was forever arranging were forever just failing of real success.

They had watched her maneuver in the ballroom. Over and over again, with a certain morbid interest, they had noted her as she approached the sleek-haired young dancing-men with the smiling request that they dance with certain lackluster girls who lined the walls.

They had learned to identify the next phase, when the young man who had been buttonholed demanded particulars, when he insisted on seeing the girl whose boredom he was presumably to relieve. The third phase was his covert stare. And often it was followed by a negative shake of the head. Then, hiding her disappointment under a casual manner if this were the outcome, the hostess would take up the search for another young man with shining hair.

When a complaisant one had been secured and he was led in triumph to the girl, there was his detached, negligent air as he asked her to dance, his insulting certainty that the invitation would be eagerly accepted. Almost equally humiliating to the sensitive was the beaming complacency of the hostess, whose smile before she hurried away seemed to trumpet: "See? It was a hard job, but I did it for you!"

With that picture in all their minds Berneice clung to her book determinedly and took a few steps toward the door.

"NOW, Berneice," said her mother, answering the girl's tone, rather than her words, "you know very well that the hostess can introduce you. Please leave the book." She did not think to include the yawning Maude in the request: whatever Berneice did, Maude would do without argument.

Berneice paused. It was true. The hostess could introduce the dancing-men to her and force some of them to dance with her. That is really what her mother implied. For the hostess was not without resources and power. When a desperate mother insisted that men be brought regardless, they were brought. The hostess seemed to have a threat which she held over certain of the dancing youths which she used in emergencies. They obeyed when she really cracked the whip, though often sulkily.

Berneice tapped the thick and luxurious rug, woven in cunning imitation of tapestry, meditatively for a moment. Then her resolution hardened. "Thanks, mother," she returned, coldly, "but I don't care to dance with the boys she has to drag up to dance with me."

Though Mrs. Brown fingered her pearls and frowned, she acquiesced without further argument. She liked her own way. Yet there were times when having it cost too much. This was one such time. Besides, it would be just as well. The situation could be turned to advantage.

Mr. Brown was pacing the corridor outside their rooms, waiting. A good deal of time is taken up in California resort hotels by the men in waiting, especially if they have women-folk in tow. Brown was old-fashioned but he was willing to be otherwise. He was hoping that Simons, the New York clothing man with whom he had become acquainted, would be encountered and would bring up the subject of golf again. The steelmaker had been too busy to learn golf before. He realized now it was time he played.

They went to the ballroom. It had been transformed from Americanese to Chinese by paper dragons on the pillars, Chinese characters on the parchment-paper electric shades and mandarin costumes on the orchestra and waiters. When they had been seated, Mrs. Brown leaned forward and said, low: "You see?"

"See what?" asked her husband, shortly. He had looked in vain for Simons.

"They've brought books." She turned her eyes to indicate her daughters.

"Well, what of it?"

"You know," returned Mrs. Brown, in the same cautious voice. "It means it's no use. Berneice says she doesn't want the hostess to drag up boys to dance with her."

Translated, this meant that the pilgrimage west in search of a husband was a failure. Brown looked thick-skinned and massive, but in some particulars he was sensitive. And he had more delicacy of feeling than his wife. It seemed almost indecent, this matter-of-fact assumption that they were partners in a cold-blooded matrimonial chase involving their own flesh and blood. It was humiliating that such an adventure was necessary. It was degrading that it had failed.

"I've had a letter from Mary Gaspary," went on Mrs. Brown, having impressed on her husband's mind that which she wished to impress.

"What's her trouble?" queried her husband, manipulating match and cigarette expertly in his thick but capable fingers. The business of ignition sent pinwheel showers of dazzling colored light from the single massive diamond which he wore on his left hand. Mrs. Gaspary was one of his wife's intimates and he did not like her.

"She says Clifford wants to marry Berneice."

"Well, why doesn't he?" grunted her husband, as he watched the dancers without turning his head.

"He hasn't any money."

"And never will have," added Brown.

"Unless we helped," suggested his wife, dropping her voice still more.

"What's their proposition?"

"Clifford thought if you would settle say two hundred thousand on him in tax-exempt securities they could live on the income quite comfortably. That would give them twelve thousand a year."

Mr. Brown's gray eyes smoldered. "We're to pay Cliff Gaspary two hundred thousand dollars to marry Berneice. Is that the idea? I'll see him in—"

"Clifford says it's the European custom," his wife hastened to interrupt. "And Berneice is fond of him, Baldwin."

"He's a worthless hound," replied Brown dispassionately. "Settle two hundred thousand on him, hey? So he could spend it on chorus girls? Nothing doing, Jess. Let him get out and earn it, the way I did."

"But Berneice likes him," urged Mrs. Brown again, guardedly but anxiously.

"He's a worthless hound, I tell you!" repeated her husband. "One of those Russian wolfhounds, all ornament and no use. Even the poorest American hound-dog is good for something, sometimes. But he—well, I won't do it, that's all."

It was an evening of consistent unsuccess. The hostess, Mrs. Crede, did not come near the Browns. Evidently she felt that the reading matter was a badge of surrender to the inevitable, and that she was relieved of the necessity of dragooning slim-legged boys in soft-bosomed dress shirts into dancing with the expressionless and faintly sullen girls.

DR. MARJORIE RICHMOND, San Ilisario's only woman physician, watched the unfoldment of the little tragedy of the Browns with discernment and sympathy. She was enjoying what she called her "Sabbatical Sunday." When the demands of her profession made too great inroads upon her, it was her custom to abandon the office Saturday at noon or soon thereafter, pack her most attractive gowns and sport clothes in a suitcase, and register at the Bel-Air.

She would spend Saturday night and Sunday at the big hotel. With a little-girl enjoyment of pretending, she would play that she was a wealthy resorter in California for the winter. She relaxed and luxuriated and renewed herself in doing as the real tourists did. She loved to bask in the sunshine of the glass-enclosed lobby, watching the drama of life as it unfolded, and speculating on the actors who strutted across the stage.

Dr. Richmond thoroughly enjoyed this Saturday night dance, though at times there was a fleeting shadow of half-guilt because there were so many others who were not enjoying themselves at all. Her thoughts kept reverting to the Brown family group on the right side of the ballroom in the center alcove, especially to that keen-looking girl with the terrible nose and teeth.

"It's nice to have a lot of money, Rod," she said to Dr. Roderick Nulty, who claimed most of her dances, shared professional offices with her, possessed her heart and was soon to become her husband. "It must be wonderful to step out and spend a thousand dollars for a fur coat. But either one of those Brown girls over there would gladly change places with our little office girl, provided her good looks went into the bargain."

"No, money isn't everything," agreed Dr. Nulty, with his pleasant-sounding eastern drawl.

"The younger girl—her name's Berneice—is really very nice," went on his companion. "She was in to consult me the other day about a cold. She has beautiful eyes and a good figure. And she's bright. But that nose and those teeth! They make her nothing but a caricature. No man will look at her twice. It's really too bad."

"Now, Marjorie, you're not on duty, you know." He squeezed surreptitiously the firm and slender hand that lay on his arm as they crossed the room. "You came here to get away from the sorrows and ills of other people. It's bad enough to have you worrying about the poor of San Ilisario. If you start in on the rich of the world—"

The hand patted his arm in acknowledgment of the remonstrance. "Her complexion's bad," she went on, thoughtfully. "She could help that. And I think I'll tell her so. Rod, that girl's so dreadfully handicapped I'd like to see her happily married off just for—oh, just as a compensation for so many things you're sure are going right, but don't. That's a little obscure, but you know what I mean, don't you?"

Dr. Nulty smiled understandingly as he found seats under a huge palm. "Perfectly. Beauty is only skin-deep, but the average young man demands that it be evenly spread on. You feel that it would be flying in the face of Nature if, under the circumstances, she were loved for herself alone; but you'd like to see the flight accomplished."

"That's it," returned Dr. Marjorie dreamily, still studying Berneice Brown's face. "It's so pathetic, her sitting there, her eyes glued to the pages between dances, and then to catch the hunger she doesn't know she's showing when the others are dancing."

The Browns were plucky. They were defeated but they would not retreat. They stayed until the last waltz ended at midnight. On the way out, Dr. Richmond slipped her arm impulsively through Berneice Brown's. That young woman, head held high, had the air of an empress returning in triumph from her throne room.

"WHAT a pretty dress, Miss Brown!" said the doctor cordially.

The girl flushed with pleasure. "You like it, doctor?"

"Very much indeed." And then she went on: "I'm going to be unprofessional and meddlesome, so you may tell me to mind my own business if you wish. But really, you should take more exercise. Your complexion would be better if you did."

The doctor was trading on her personality. As usual, when she projected her personality with the medium of a smile there was no rebuff, but instant response. For Dr. Richmond possessed charm and attractiveness in large measure. Her brown hair waved low on her forehead. Her lips were full, red, tender and sensitive. She seemed schooled, disciplined. And yet the outer shell of professional manner which the doctor draws on over his sympathies to protect them from the sufferings of others never quite fitted her. She liked people and was sorry for them. And of course they always felt it and appreciated it.

The girl inclined to her, physically as well as mentally, as they passed into the lobby. "Oh, but, doctor," she said eagerly, "I ride every day!"

Dr. Richmond smiled with pleasant scornfulness. "Ride! Horseback-riding is a lazy man's prescription. There's more real exercise in an hour of walking or swimming than in a week on horseback. Why don't you take a plunge in the ocean each morning?"

"But it's winter. It's still February."

"Winter in the East, yes. But lots of Californians never miss their plunge the year round. The air may be a little sharp these mornings. But that makes the water seem almost warm by contrast. You are healthy and strong. You would react splendidly. It's just the sort of tonic you need."

"I'll start tomorrow morning!" declared the girl, with sudden resolve. So far as she knew, no one among the hotel guests was doing it. Ocean bathing in late winter was not the thing in San Ilisario. But carrying a book to the ballroom had somehow released her from blind obedience to unwritten rules which bound more successful girls. She felt emancipated; she could do as she pleased.

The determination seemed rather a foolish one when the red eye of the sun peered from the ocean next morning. But Berneice arose, arrayed herself in her bathing-suit, drew on buckskin shoes for the hundred-yard walk to the beach, and caught up a bathrobe. Maude, on being invited to go along, half opened one eye, said with feeble scorn, "A plunge—in the middle of winter—at this hour?" and was instantly asleep again.

THERE was a tingle in the atmosphere as the girl slipped out onto the deserted veranda and padded down the steps. The sky was cloudless and the horizontal rays of the sun already genial. She ran swiftly across the clipped green lawn which rolled in carpetlike perfection to Ocean Boulevard.

At the low sea-wall, however, she hesitated. She had expected to have all to herself the reaches of white sand on which the gentle breakers spent themselves. But, early as it was, there were a dozen before her, boys and girls, shouting and splashing in joyous camaraderie.

The idea of joining them was distasteful. She did not want boisterous comment on her preliminary shivers before mustering courage to dive into an advancing wave. That sort of comment was being hurled at a girl who had preceded her and who stood undecided just above the water line.

These people were not hotel guests. That was apparent. They were townsfolk who saw the interior of the great hostelry only rarely. Up the beach twenty seconds' sprint away was Castle Point. Just beyond it, she knew, was the pleasure pier, in a snug little cove. The pier was abandoned at this season of the year, since boats did not begin running to the Channel Islands until May. She hurried up the sands.

When the Point had been turned she halted with a little sigh of satisfaction. She was alone with the tender blue sky, the lazy sea, the warming sun, and a vision of precipitous islands, pearl-gray and purple, in mid-channel twenty miles away.

She dropped the bathrobe, waded in until the water curled about her knees, and then dived determinedly. Almost immediately she splashed upright with a gasp that was a strangled scream, and ran shivering to shore. She had not dreamed that water could be so outrageously, so barbarically, cold.

As she stamped on the sand the reaction came and she waded in again. It did not seem so arctic this time. She was considering another plunge when the head of a swimmer appeared from around the pleasure pier and followed a course which brought him to the shallows near by. The swimmer, a young man, greeted her matter-of-factly.

"Hello!" he said. "A little chilly, isn't it?"

"Y-yes," she chattered.

"Better get in again," he advised. "It's colder up there than it is in the water."

Obediently she thrust herself into the surf. The youth turned about and with strong, overhand strokes headed away from the beach. "Let's swim out to the float," he suggested. Two metal cylinders, banded together side by side and surmounted by a red platform which was just above the water level, bobbed on the swell. She followed his lead.

"Your stroke's wrong," observed the youth abruptly, when they had crawled onto the slats of the float. "It isn't timed right with your kick. I'll show you." And he slipped into the water.

Berneice watched closely the demonstration, even while she was tasting the novelty of the situation. Men in the past had had but one of two manners which they exhibited toward her. Either she was Baldwin Brown's daughter, to be treated with effusive consideration which was distasteful because of its insincerity, or she was a homely girl who had to be danced with. But her sex was not forgotten in either instance. All made her feel the reproach of being a woman who was not good to look upon. She bewildered them somehow, and made them feel slightly cheated.

This tanned and muscular youth, however, placed her in neither category. She was a casual acquaintance of the beach. She observed, he apparently assumed, the rule of the public beach that one should be friendly whether or not there had been a formal introduction. He was not formal, certainly; but he was not flirtatious. There was a man-to-man air about him that Berneice found as refreshing as it was strange.

"YOU'RE up to the hotel, aren't you?" he questioned, when she had improved her stroke markedly under his tutelage and they were resting on the sands, now gratefully warm.

"Yes," she replied, without further commitment.

"Who you with?" he asked, with the same pleasant casualness, drawing circles meanwhile with a forefinger on which, she observed, the nail was thick and broken.

"Why, with my—" she began, and stopped. For, with a mounting flush of humiliation and resentment, she realized that he had mistaken her for a maid in one of the families of wealthy Easterners who thronged the hotel. He had, as a matter of course, assumed that a girl with a nose like a funny picture and a pair of spade-teeth could be nothing but a servant.

Her ruffled feelings quieted. After all, her sense of innate justice told her, he was not to blame for the mistake. It was natural. The daughter of a millionaire did not usually bathe at sunup, unattended, on a public bathing-beach. And she did not look like—well, like Berneice Brown, when she did.

The quaintness, the odd flavor of the situation, more than repaid her for the lack of compliment to her appearance. "I'm with the Baldwin Brown family," she said.

The young man was resting his strong, smooth chin on his knees. His arms were clasped about his ankles. His short, rough dark hair was of the sort that water does not make sleek. He looked rather like a faun, Berneice realized, as he sat there in negligent grace, his toes wiggling and burrowing in the sand.

"Uh-huh," he said, recognizing the name. "He's that Chicago steel millionaire, isn't he, the big fellow with the gray hair and the prize-fighter hands?"

"Yes," admitted Berneice, amused in secret by the apt description of her father. "He started in the steel mills as a workman, you know."

"He looks like a regular guy," approved the youth. "Are they good—" And then, realizing that the question trenched too much on the personal for short acquaintance, he changed it with instinctive tact: "Do they take you around a good deal?"

"This is our first trip to California. They take me everywhere, though. We've been abroad and to Florida. We go up into Canada, summers."

"I wanted to go to France," said the youth wistfully. "My outfit went. But they kept me at Kearny all through the war. I'm an electrician, you know. I guess I was too useful to them."

"Do you come up here every morning?" asked Berneice.

"Yeah. I don't have to go to work till eight-thirty. I always think I'll sleep Sunday mornings, but I'm awake at the usual time so I come just the same." He rose. "You be down here tomorrow morning and I'll teach you the Australian crawl. So long." With a nod he was gone, running lightly down the beach and around Castle Point.

It was chilling, and yet it was encouraging, that parting command. Berneice pondered on it when, after a little time, she gathered her bathrobe about her and ran, too. There was not a semblance of the young man "making a date," as the street phrase has it, when he had given it. But on the other hand it was a friendly command, from a chap who had run up against another chap on the beach whom he liked and whom he wished to see again.

"He's a nice boy," said Berneice to herself as, singing softly, she rubbed her skin to a glow with a thick towel in the bathroom. "He's simple, like Dad. He says right out what he thinks. But he doesn't need to be afraid, because his thoughts are kindly. He's the sort you can depend on, too. I'll bet no one ever doubts his word."

She was defending herself from herself for the informality of the meeting and for the determination, already reached, to go to the beach next morning. Furthermore she admitted honestly that she did not intend to tell her parents—yet.

"I don't care," she thought again, defiantly. "It's a lot more fun than sitting like—like a spear in that old ballroom. If it turns out that he isn't as nice as he seems, why, I can stop going.

"Um-mm, I'm hungry! I wonder when breakfast will be ready."

BERNEICE awoke Monday at an absurdly early hour with a buoyant sense of expectation. For a little time she probed for the cause. And when she had found it, she lay without moving.

It was foolish, she reasoned, to lose two good hours of sleep to immolate one's self in freezing water for the companionship of an electrician—a mere laborer. Especially as the laborer did not care whether she came or not, undoubtedly. If she didn't appear, he would swim just as companionably with some other youth of the lower classes, or with one of the girls whose vocabulary, yesterday morning, seemed to consist mostly of shrieks. No; she wouldn't go. She burrowed luxuriously into the bed-clothing, and closed her eyes.

A dozen heartbeats. Then the covers were propelled violently over the foot of the bed by a violent kick and she arose with an eager bound. In an astonishingly few moments the bathing-suit had been adjusted and she was running across the lawn, the bathrobe flapping gaily behind.

He was awaiting her near the pleasure pier. He had not yet been in the water. He was going through a series of twistings and contortions in a sort of measured cadence. There was a flowing grace in his movements.

"Army setting-up exercises," he greeted her, with a smile. "When I had to do this I thought it was a fierce grind. But it's fun when there isn't some one round to tell you you have to."

"I don't recall having heard your name," observed Berneice.

The youth, who was bending stiff-kneed to place the palms of his hands on the sand, said carelessly: "Oh, call me Garrick."

It was not until some days later that she learned this was a nickname bestowed upon him because he had been a stagehand at the old Garrick Theater, now an abandoned ruin on a San Ilisario side street.

"What's yours?" he asked, giving over the exercises after walking on his hands a few paces as a sort of final flourish.

"The family call me Bennie," she replied. "How about that stroke you were going to teach me?"

The swimming lesson was duly given and on succeeding mornings other strokes were taught. The family accepted the daily hour on the beach as part of Berneice's routine. None offered to join her. After Maude had refused several half-hearted invitations, she was no longer asked.

In practical effect the waters about the pleasure pier constituted a private swimming-pool for Berneice and Garrick. There was never a morning that there were not other bathers; but custom kept them from rounding Castle Point. Sometimes the pair would see a hardy swimmer driving out to sea for a little distance before he turned and came back with the long, leisurely swells. But he did not invade the bit of beach which they had come to regard as theirs.

They talked of many things: Europe, of which the untraveled Garrick was never tired of hearing; music, which he loved, but of which he knew little; electricity and its application to everyday uses; the army and the war; and life in general.

Berneice knew a good deal of psychology, natural and instinctive knowledge from her own consciousness and knowledge acquired by others and set down in books. Absorbedly she applied it to the reactions of Garrick to their companionship.

She noted how, presently, his one-fellow-and-another air of their first casual acquaintance was replaced by an offhand, elder-brother manner. He was pleasantly brusque, the brusqueness deepening into good-humored impatience when she did not acquire swimming lore as readily as he thought she should.

This phase passed, too. Berneice realized, though Garrick did not, that now he was getting ready for love. The home-making instinct was rousing. He went deeply into his hopes and ambitions. He told how much money he earned and how much he saved. He explained in detail his work in wiring the new high-school building.

He dreamed of having, some day, a shop and business of his own. "Beller and Grout, my firm, make a barrel of money," he told her. "They have all the work they can do. But Beller's getting old. He wants to sell out and retire to his ranch up the valley. It would be a great chance for me if I had seven or eight thousand dollars to pay down. I could raise the rest off the earnings."

Then he would drift to a discussion of the bungalows and the Spanish-Colonial houses in which he had done the electrical work. He drew diagrams of the more attractive ones in the sand, changing them to suit his own ideas. This was fascinating. Berneice left off psycho-analyzing the naïve young man to quarrel with him on the location of a fireplace and the varieties of shrubs to plant in the yard.

"YOU sure have big ideas," he told her ~~scornfully, one day~~. "Working for millionaires has turned your head. There you go, terracing the front yard and putting in a fountain and adding twenty feet to the living-room."

"Well, what of it?" she retorted coolly. "That's the way I like it."

"Oh, the way you like it!" he mimicked. "Do you know what a place like that would cost? Ten thousand dollars. I—you—you can't afford it!"

Tardily he began to see where this was leading him. Partly because at that moment the amused, superior, faintly contemptuous Berneice, who had been assuring herself that she was simply studying the rather elemental processes of this uneducated boy, blushed most embarrassingly.

Her aloof and patronizing mental barriers were swept away, hopeless wreckage, on the rising tide of that blush. Her blue eyes sought the sand. A constrained and disturbing silence fell. It was broken by Garrick saying, with a fair assumption of lightness, "Aw, go ahead and build your castles for all of me!" Then he took a few swift steps and dived into the heart of a majestic comber just as it broke.

The blush receded. Berneice continued to sit on the sand, hugging her knees. The youth's sudden withdrawal seemed like an admission that he had been betrayed into hinting at a sentiment which he did not feel; that, furthermore, he regretted the hint and feared she might take advantage of it.

"He needn't run away," she told herself resentfully. "I'm not trying to entrap him. Not that it would do any good if I did," she mused mournfully, "with a comic-valentine nose and beaver teeth. Oh, darn! Why couldn't I have looked like other girls?" Tears smarted in her eyes as she caught up her robe, waved him a gay farewell, and trotted off toward the hotel.

Garrick could not understand the chill of the ocean nor the bleakness of the sun the next few days. Being a loyal Californian, he wondered gravely if the charm of the climate was not fading somewhat. He was too unsophisticated to realize that the reason for the unsatisfactory temperatures was Berneice's self-scorning analysis and its results.

"He doesn't care anything about me," she had told herself. "He's just aching to be in love with somebody. I happen to be the only one of the other sex around. If a pretty girl came along he'd forget I existed. All the tricks he's doing now are mere manifestations of the dominant male who wants to impress the brilliance of his plumage on the female. He'd be just—just hateful if he knew what he was doing!"

The tricks to which she referred were spectacular diving feats. A springboard was attached to the upper side of the pleasure pier not far from the end. It projected out over deep blue water within easy distance of the float, and fully fifteen feet at this stage of the tide above the water.

He would poise a moment on the board, hands together above his head. There would come a quick muscular contraction and a spring which hurled him into the air. Then, his strong brown body turning with graceful swiftness, he would strike the water with as little splash as a seal and go far under. When his head appeared, he would jerk it quickly once to shake the water out of his eyes, and strike out for the ladder which led back to the surface of the dock.

Berneice on the float watched him with half-fearful fascination, despite her cold analysis of subconscious mainsprings of action. Diving was one accomplishment in the water which she could not master. She turned dizzy with fright when she looked on the sea from a height, and contemplated having to hurl herself down upon it.

Garrick explained over and over again that it was impossible for her to be hurt or drowned; that all she had to do was to straighten her body and let herself go. Her heart continued to sink away into a void at the thought. She could not and would not dive.

Still striving to drive the chill from the ocean and put more gold into the sunlight, Garrick prepared for his most thrilling stunt. It was one he reserved for special occasions. He had done it, during their acquaintanceship, but once before.

The pleasure pier had been considerably longer in years past. But a southwester blowing in from the upper reaches of the channel, the heaviest storm of its decade, had smashed the outer third as though it were made of matches. The upper works were torn free and battered to pieces by the breakers. Some of the piles were uprooted.

Those that remained in the wrecked segment when the storm cleared projected above the sea like the blackened fangs in an old man's jaws. They constituted an unsightly menace. The city council decreed they should be cut off at low-tide line. It would have been better to remove them whole. But this was considered too expensive.

The timbers were sawed off. The outer end of the wharf was enclosed by a continuation of the railing from the upper side. Thereafter the light-draft excursion steamer and the tugs tied up at the lower side of the pier.

The sawed-off piles were a lure and a menace to bold divers. At high tide they could be seen, a nest of them, round black shadows down in the water at the pier's end. At low tide their tops glistened momentarily between the attacks of successive breakers. No swimmer was considered to have won the badge of real expertness until he had defied them.

This defiance consisted in mounting the railing, clinging with anxious toes to the narrow ledge on top until the precise moment arrived, and then diving. This moment was the comparative smoothness between two breakers, when the piles appeared in true perspective, undisturbed by the fretful roll of the waters.

If the dive were perfectly accomplished, the venturesome one struck in the center of a horseshoe of the black snouts. The base of this horseshoe was toward the wharf, and its sides were so close that outflung hands would touch them. But ahead the points opened out for a little distance, so that the swimmer shot forward between two other grim guardians into a space somewhat larger.

If the spring were too short the neophyte striving for his certificate of courage would strike the lower rim of the horseshoe. If he miscalculated to left or right, the snouts awaited him there. And if in rising from a perfect dive he did not maintain a straight course, others offered themselves to his unprotected head.

WHEN a back somersault from the wet springboard brought only a lifted eyebrow from Berneice, Garrick climbed up the ladder and sauntered to the railing at the outer end of the pier. He looked down contemplatively. And then he glanced at the float and smiled.

"Don't be silly, Garrick," commanded Berneice, urgently. There was every evidence of perturbation in her manner, and the sun seemed warmer to him.

"I want to show you a real dive," he announced, clambering slowly onto the railing.

The girl stood up on the float. "Don't do it," she entreated. "You've shown me that one before. Please! It's too dangerous."

"It isn't dangerous at all, Bennie," he scoffed. "Nothing to it."

"Please—" she began, again. But he had leaped.

He came up again, almost immediately, steering his course neatly among the snouts, and swam to the float.

"What's the matter with your knuckles?" she asked, as he drew himself upon it.

"I barked 'em," he confessed, grinning. "Got too close to the right side."

Her face was pale. The blue eyes revealed the heat lightnings of anger. "I'm glad of it!" she declared, sharply. "There was no sense—" The mood changed swiftly. "You aren't badly hurt, are you, Garrick?" she asked anxiously.

A SERPENT with a red head entered their watery Eden. They were sitting on the sand one pleasant morning, squabbling over the location of a fireplace in a model house which Garrick had sketched, when a girl swam around the pier from Castle Point and waded ashore.

"Hello, Garrick!" she called gaily. "So here's where you've been keeping yourself, old stingy! The gang's been wondering where you were." She gave Berneice a swift glance, a smile and a nonchalant "Hello."

Berneice always noted their noses first. This girl had a trim, straight, beautiful little nose. She wore a crimson bathing-cap which was set off by a coquettish yellow bow on top. Yellow hair which looked as if it might be fluffy when dry had escaped from the front of the cap on either side, and lay in tight little ringlets against her cheeks.

She wore a crimson bathing-suit, "A boy's bathing-suit, two sizes too small," decided Berneice dispassionately, as she grudgingly admired the plump though slender body so faithfully revealed. With a sweep of her hand Berneice blotted out the house-plan as, uninvited, the girl sat down.

"Hello, Peggy," returned Garrick. "Oh, the gang has wondered, has it? Well, you needn't tell them where we are. Their idea of comedy was splashing water all the time."

"I won't tell," promised Peggy. "Gee! This is cozy up here. It's a lot more sheltered from the wind."

Apparently she did not tell, for none of the others invaded the cove by the pleasure-pier. Peggy herself, however, claimed a share in it by right of discovery. She came every morning thereafter.

Peggy—her last name was never mentioned and Berneice did not know what it was—liked Garrick. She showed it, to Berneice at least, in many ways. The youth's attitude toward her was one of good-natured indifference. He was blunt almost to rudeness at times. Yet he did not resent her presence.

Berneice neither deluded nor amused herself with psycho-analysis after Peggy's coming. She was too busy studying and resenting the other girl. She came to regret that she had imposed ironclad limits on her association with Garrick. On the ground that she was busy the rest of the day and during the evening, she had discouraged his efforts to see her except in the morning. She did not dare risk the possibility of his discovering her real identity. For what had begun as a lark was now a serious problem. There had been narrow escapes, too. She had evaded by quick action chance meetings on State Street while with her parents and Maude, for such a meeting would have proved their relationship. And on the other hand there was the unpleasant chance of the family's learning of her friendship for Garrick.

PEGGY had no such handicaps. She chattered to Garrick of American Legion parties and the dances at Community Center they both attended; of mutual acquaintances; and of past events in San Ilisario's history outside Berneice's knowledge. Garrick tried to include Berneice in the conversation, but with little success.

Peggy, who was a stenographer in a lawyer's office, it transpired, had revised her estimate of Berneice. At first, her obvious mental processes showed, she did not consider a maid, and a maid so handicapped by lack of comeliness, as a rival. But she learned enough from Garrick's attitude, apparently, to cause her disquiet.

Thereafter she wooed him almost openly. She needed help to climb onto the float from the water. She insisted on diving from his shoulders. At her suggestion they tried combination leaps from the springboard. She splashed him until, after struggles which she did nothing to shorten, she was finally ducked. Toward Berneice at such times she was slyly, maliciously triumphant.

Berneice's answer was to absent herself from the beach one morning. But this was an experiment fraught with pain and danger. She moped about the hotel all day, feeling lonesome and neglected. Garrick called up during the afternoon. Her answers to his eager questions were guarded and unsatisfactory, for Maude evinced curiosity.

"I'm a cheat," she told herself, as she hung up the receiver. "I'm cheating Garrick. If he knew who I am, he'd have nothing to do with me. I'm cheating mother and dad. They don't know I'm meeting him. It must stop. I'll—I'll stay away altogether and tease them to go home, or on to Coronado." She quite believed that her resolution was genuine. But the next morning, which was Sunday, she hurried again to the cove by the pier.

Garrick and Peggy were before her.

"Where were you yesterday morning?" reproached the youth. "Gee! I thought you were sick, or something."

"I didn't feel very well."

"That's too bad. Better now?"

"Yes, thanks, Garrick." She turned away to test the water cautiously with her toes.

"And when I called up," he went on, "I made an awful hit with the telephone-girl at the Bel-Air. You see, I didn't know your name, and I asked for 'Bennie, in the Baldwin Brown apartments.' She giggled, but she got you all right. Guess she knew who you are."

"Yes, she knows," said Berneice, wading out.

"Let's dive," suggested Peggy, as they sat on the float a half-hour later. "I feel like doing a few stunts today." She turned to Berneice. "Why don't you ever dive, Bennie?"

"I'm afraid," returned the other girl simply.

Peggy laughed shrilly. "Why, say, kiddo, there's nothing to be afraid of! You can't get hurt. But of course if you haven't the nerve it's better not to try it."

To Berneice the whole situation had suddenly grown preposterous and impossible. She felt that events through the past weeks had been marching up to present themselves in inescapable formation this morning, this hour. It was worse than taking a book into the ballroom, worse than being alone and unsought, this daily ordeal of being baited by a frizzly-haired stenographer and all but ignored by a thick-headed electrician!

"I think I will dive," she said coolly, though her heart beat heavily at the thought. She plunged into the water and swam to the ladder.

"Attaboy!" applauded Garrick as he, with Peggy, followed her to the wharf. "The first one is always the hardest. After that, you'll be all right."

She had their attention as she slipped through the railing and adventured out on the plank. At the second step she stopped, trembling. Looking down on it from this great height, she found the water terrifying. The waves, foam-tipped and curving over like shells before they broke, were remorseless and cruel. The wharf vibrated as they slammed solidly into the foundation timbers. Suppose she didn't strike just right and was numbed so she couldn't swim. She would be tossed, rolled, smothered, thrown against the piles.

A MASS of brown kelp came floating in sluggishly. It looked slimy and entangling. It passed. There was a shadow as a fish swam under the board, far down. Suppose it was a shark. She had heard talk of catching sharks. Of course they said they weren't man-eaters in these waters, but who really knew?

Suppose this one was a shark and swam back again as she struck the water! There were devilfish here, too, the dreaded octopi with long, snaky, bloodsucking arms that crushed one and dragged one down, down—

"Oh, I can't!" she cried involuntarily, and retreated gropingly to the rail.

Peggy's high laugh pricked her with mean barbs. "Well, for Pete's sake, don't, then!" advised the fluffy girl, flippantly. "Come on, Garrick! The double dive—I'll sit on your shoulders."

"And then what?" asked Garrick, rather absently, for he was looking sympathetically at Berneice. "When do you break loose?"

"I don't. You just drop off the board feet first and go straight down. Next time we'll do some frills."

"All right," agreed Garrick. He climbed the railing and stood with his back to it on the plank. "Get aboard."

Peggy mounted the rail and took his hands, which were raised above his head and turned backward. She slid a rounded calf over the bronze shoulder and paused to smile maliciously at Berneice. "Great sport, diving, Bennie!" she taunted. "You ought to learn how!"

"I can dive!" Berneice heard herself replying breathlessly to this intolerable challenge. "I'll show you a real one. I don't have to hang on to some one else, either." She ran to the end of the pier.

"Here, what are you doing?" demanded Garrick roughly, turning his head. "Don't be a fool, Bennie!"

As Berneice climbed the railing she noted with a thrill how quickly and masterfully he moved. His lunge shook him free of the crimson-clad Peggy so completely that she sprawled on the pier. As he vaulted the rail and ran toward her Berneice stood upright, hung for a moment over the blackened teeth of the sawed-off timbers, and sprang.

DR. RICHMOND, enjoying another of her Sabbatical Sundays at the Bel-Air, was up early. She was on the veranda, gazing at a panorama she loved—the sea and the purple and pearl-gray isles of mystery in front; the Coast Range skirting the ocean and running off to infinity along the sky to the east; the friendly, green-clad Mesa towering in close proximity on the west. In the foreground groups of noble palms filled in to the last satisfying detail the exotic picture.

Exclamations and confused babblings attracted her attention. Diagonally across the lawn came an irregular procession of bathers at an agitated pace, half-trot, half-run. In the van, staggering as he came, was a youth with rough, short black hair, who carried a young woman over his shoulder. A pretty girl in a crimson bathing-suit shrieked startlingly as, alternately, she wrung her hands and clung to the youth's free arm, impeding his progress.

He headed straight toward the doctor, mounted the steps and laid the unconscious figure in a long wicker settee near by. The open-mouthed, staring-eyed bathers formed a fan on the broad steps below.

"For God's sake, take care of her, Doc!" gasped the youth. There was a bloody froth about his lips. His breath came with a faint, queer bubbling as he swayed before her.

"Who is she?" asked the doctor crisply, turning to look at the crimsoned, disfigured face.

"Mrs. Baldwin Brown's maid," replied the youth, moving his head from side to side slowly, as if to facilitate the passage of air to his lungs through his open mouth. His swaying became a slump. The bubbling sound in his throat grew louder.

"It's Mrs. Baldwin Brown's daughter Berneice," announced the astonished Dr. Richmond, after another swift look. "Catch him, quick!" For Garrick's slump had become complete unconsciousness.

The telephone call caught Dr. Nulty just as he finished shaving in his rooms uptown. When he reached the Bel-Air with his instrument-case Berneice, still unconscious, had been placed on an improvised operating table in one of the sample-rooms. Her battered face had been sponged. Dr. Richmond gently herded the members of the Baldwin Brown family, their faces plaster-gray, into the hall and shut the door.

"She dived off the end of the pleasure-pier," she explained, "and struck on one of those horrid piles. The forehead received most of the shock, although her face is quite badly cut and the ends of her front teeth are broken off. This young chap they called Garrick jumped in after her as she was sinking and smashed his side. They've taken him to the hospital.

"I think she has a slight concussion but of the two he's probably hurt the worst. We'll go out and see him after a while. Slade's looking after him. Now, Rod, there's one thing I want done right away. Fix her nose."

Doctor Nulty turned from an examination of the patient. "Why, her nose is all right. I don't know how it happened, but it escaped being broken."

Dr. Richmond stamped her foot. "Her nose isn't all right! This accident is just providential. And we're the agents of Providence. Don't you see? The dentist will rebuild her teeth so they don't project. You can straighten out her nose so it won't be a caricature any more. They'll think it's due to the accident."

"I haven't seen any commission making you the runner-up to Providence, Marjorie," returned Dr. Nulty, with a sort of dry doubtfulness, "or me her agent, so far as that goes. I'm not sure but what you're asking is unethical. What's your idea as to straightening it?"

Marjorie Richmond, though not a surgeon, was a doctor, and she could have told him the technique of the operation which he, of course, knew very well. It consisted in the removal of a bit of cartilage from the under side of the partition between the nostrils; the closing of the gap by drawing the tip of the nose downward and inward; and the sewing of the shortened partition in place.

But, being a woman first and a physician afterward, she scorned the simple professional explanation for one which could well have come from the most untutored daughter of Eve. It was coupled with one of the most elemental—and effective—of threats:

"Rod Nulty, fix that nose so some nice boy will love her. And if you—care anything about me, you'd better stop objecting and do it right now!"

ONE of the net results of that desperate leap from the pier was a spoiled Berneice Brown. Dr. Nulty and San Ilisario's best dentist worked their magic. When the alchemy was completed and the bandages removed, Berneice called for a mirror and looked long and earnestly.

The face which confronted her had not been permanently scarred by coming into contact with a timber. The complexion was clear and soft. The nose was straight, delicate and patrician. The red lips closed pensively over perfect teeth. The dark blue eyes had taken on an added brilliance and beauty.

She heaved a sigh of ineffable content and laid the mirror down within easy reach of her hand. "That's something like," she declared, and established a merciless rule over her family. Maude forgot her indolence in fetching and carrying for the newly discovered beauty. Mrs. Brown was humble in contemplation of the miracle. She had never petted her daughter a great deal in babyhood. But, now that the ugly duckling had after all become a swan, the tenderness withheld from an unattractive child was lavished on an attractive daughter.

There had always been sympathy and understanding between Berneice and her father. He became her prime minister, so steadily on duty that there was barely time for a round of golf daily.

"Dad, how's Garrick?" she demanded, on the day she had been promoted from bed to chaise-longue and was queening it in the most frivolously beautiful of negligees.

"They let him go home from the hospital yesterday."

"It's about time."

"Oh, I don't know, Bennie. Don't forget that boy had three broken ribs and that one of them pierced his lung. He's lucky to be alive at all."

"What does he say about me?"

Her father took considerable time in lighting his cigarette. "Oh, nothing particular," he said, at last.

"That isn't true, you know, Dad. You don't prevaricate very successfully. You've been going to see him every day. You had to talk about something. What did he say?"

"Well, Ben, he just didn't like the way you—the way he said you deceived him. He's a nice kid, independent as anything. I don't know that I blame him. If he'd known you weren't your own maid; that is, if he'd known you were a Brown instead of a Smith, say, he wouldn't have had anything to do with you."

"Indeed! Aren't men righteous?" was her flippant comment. She tapped her lips with a contemplative forefinger. "You go and fetch him," she commanded.

"Hum! Go and fetch him, she says—just like that. Suppose he won't come! And if he does, what then? What are your plans, youngster?"

Berneice dropped her head to give close attention to a newly discovered task, the straightening and smoothing of the fringe on the gay rug across her knees. "I thought I'd marry him," she said, not very loud. "It's the least you can do for a boy that's saved your life."

"Oh, you did! And what would you live on! He's only an electrician, you know."

" 'Only' is good, Dad, from you," she retorted spiritedly. "When you were his age you were wheeling pig-iron in a steel mill. He's earning more money than you were when you married mother. Who are you to be so high and mighty, I'd like to know.

"Don't forget he'll have a rich father-in-law, and you hadn't. You'll buy him an interest in his business—and build us a house."

Baldwin Brown tried to look concerned. "But how do you know—really, Ben, he seems quite put out with you. Talks all the time about what you did. I'm not sure—"

She interrupted him impatiently. "Dad, dear, you're not, but I am. Would I be sending for him if I weren't? Talks about what I did to him, does he? Old silly, don't you see that's just an excuse to talk about me? Good-by!"

"Cliff Gaspary will be here tomorrow," he reminded her, as he arose.

"Oh, Cliff!" She raised one graceful shoulder. "That's nothing to get excited over. Are you going?"

"Yes, I'm going! But what will your mother say?"

Berneice laughed. "I knew that was your trouble, Dad. Mother will not say a word. She is a changed woman." Her father grinned a conspirator's grin as he closed the door.

Long days in the hospital had lightened

Garrick's tan. And his wrists, Berneice noted, as he stood hesitantly by the door some minutes later, were bony. His eyes surveyed her in utter, unbelieving amazement and wonder. His fingers relaxed; his straw hat fell unheeded to the floor. "You're not—Bennie!" he breathed, at last.

"Yes, I am, Garrick," she said, blushing and sparkling at the compliment. "Come over here and shake hands."

He held his ground. "I don't know why I should. You—"

"I fooled you and you didn't like it. Your poor pride is all torn, isn't it?"

HE REARED his head with a feeble counterfeit of the old offhand supremacy. "I'm not a fortune hunter," he declared roughly. "I'm not pushing myself—"

"Blah, blah!" she interrupted impudently. "Sit down here by me. That's better. Your hand is cold. What do you think of me, Garrick?" She leaned toward him and smiled into his face.

"You're not my girl," he replied, scowling, though he clung to her fingers. "You're too rich; and you're too pretty. I haven't any business here." He looked about the luxurious chamber. "Back on the beach we seemed to be just suited to each other. But here, I don't belong. Why, I'm only a poor guy of an electrician!" He was wistful and forlorn under the brusquerie.

"Garrick, that's perfect." She sighed ecstatically. "You couldn't have said a nicer thing. 'Too pretty!' I've a notion to keep you around, just to talk that way to me. But, of course, you don't know anything about planning houses—"

"I know enough to put a fireplace on the east side!"

"But not enough to put it on the north side."

Garrick's next move was masterly, his speech inspired. "Let's build 'em on both sides," he suggested.

"Let's," she agreed comfortably, from the shelter of his arms.

Another Great Novel of the Sea

By Francis Brett Young

THE colors of the palette Francis Brett Young uses in the painting of this picture—"The Sea Horses"—are raw ones, primitive, brilliant with the hues of the tropics. Love, hate, greed, jealousy, fear, revenge—with these emotions he deals, and has wrought a tale absorbing in its interest, breathless in its suspense. It carries the breath of the sea, and the miasmic breath, too, of the delta of an East African river. With a skill almost uncanny the minds of a man and a woman are probed; the secrets of their hearts, hidden even from themselves, are revealed—and are revealed as they should be, not through long and dreary speculation and analysis, but in those actions that spring from their true desires, and shape and mold their lives. It is a story told with a striking and beautiful economy; all that does not carry the drama toward its conclusion is stripped away. Its grip is established immediately and continues till the last line. Beginning in—

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NOISE

Sam Simpson Wasn't So Big and He Didn't Say So Much; but When It Came to a Real Job, He Was Right There

By William Hazlett Upson

THERE is lots of noise in the tractor business. The tractors make a big noise. The tractor salesmen and service men make more. But the biggest and noisiest noise I heard in all the time I worked for the Farmers' Friend Tractor Company came from a bird who owned one of the tractors—Jim Swigley, the demon of the Mississippi swamps.

It was one sleepy, peaceful Sunday morning. Little Sam Simpson and I had just got back from demonstrating a couple of Ten Ton Earthworm Tractors that the company was trying to sell to the Park Commission up in Chicago, and we had stopped around at the factory to see if there was any mail for us. It being Sunday, everything was pretty quiet. We found we had no mail, and we were starting home, when we heard a noise from the front office and looked in to see what it was.

Now, the front office was where the president of the works used to hang out, and it sure was a swell dump. A big mahogany desk all polished up as handsome as any bar you ever run acrost in the old days. Big expensive chairs. Swell wall-paper, swell woodwork, and on the floor an elegant oriental rug as soft and beautiful as the cushions in a Pullman. Then at one end of the room was a genuine oil painting that they said was the pride of the president's heart. It showed an army model Earthworm Tractor, with a funny little guy with a beard in the driver's seat, and underneath the picture was a sign that said, "His Majesty, the King of England, in his Earthworm Tractor." And then under that it said: "There is but one Earthworm. The Farmers' Friend Tractor Company builds it."

On week days when the president was using this office, I used to be scared of the place, on account of the president being such a big bug, and the office such an elegant joint. But this Sunday when I stuck my snoot in the door, I had to laugh, because there was old Bill Johnson, and Luke Torkle, and another bird that had on a red necktie—all of them nothing but service men like Sam and me. And they was lolling around in the fancy upholstered chairs, and chewing tobacco, and resting their thumbs in the armholes of their vests, and using the big brass spittoons, and swapping yarns.

So Sam and I went in and sat down, too. And just about this time Jim Swigley was getting off the train down at the station and heading out toward the factory. But we didn't know it, so we just sat there unsuspecting, and listened to the bird with the red necktie. I forget his name, but he had a loud voice.

"SPEAKING of hard-boiled hombres," he said, "I've met a lot of 'em since I been a service man for this company. I've met tough ones. And I've met 'em as mean and ornery as they make 'em. But them birds don't put no muffler on me. I talk to 'em. I tell 'em. The tougher they come, the better I like 'em. I remember a tough Swede up in Duluth—"

"That's me, too," said Luke Torkle. "There can't none of them birds get funny with me. I'm a peaceful guy, but if they think they can impose on me, they got a surprise on the way. I remember one guy out in Kansas by the name of Wilkins, that tried to get hard-boiled to me. Had a daughter by the name of Mildred. Good-looking girl, too—"

"Never mind the girl," said old Bill Johnson. "What about the tough guy?"

"Well, you see, this bird owned an old-style Model Forty-five Tractor that needed new bearings in the transmission, and they sent me out to do the job. And this was one of them old, old tractors that come out before the days of Hyatts and Timkens. All the bearings was babbitt, and had to be repoured.

"We had a mean time. This bird Wilkins was too cheap to get a house for the machine, and he had it right out in the middle of the prairie, with sand blowing around, and the sun just a-burning and a-blazing—you know how the sun is in Kansas—and not a tree or a speck of shade in miles. And no tools to work with.

"It took me a day and a half to get the thing torn down and the old babbitt chiseled out of the bearings. Which got old Wilkins sore, because he was in a hurry to get started again. All the time I was working he was crabbing about how much expense the tractor was, and how much money he was losing by being idle. But finally we got all the shafting back in the transmission case, and blocked up in place. And that took a lot more time, because you have to get each shaft exactly in the middle of what is going to be the bearing, and you have to have every gear meshed right to a hair with every other gear. And each bearing has to be dammed up with mud. Then you melt up the babbitt metal and pour it in around the shaft and the mud keeps it from running away, and when it cools, there you have your bearing."

"We know how to babbitt a transmission," said old Bill Johnson, kind of weary. "Tell us about the tough guy."

"Well, as I was saying, this Wilkins was sore already about the length of time it was taking. But I didn't say nothing. I got the fire going, and melted up a ladle full of babbitt, and I was just pouring it into the front bearing when my foot slipped."

"All right," said Bill. "Go on. We're listening."

"My foot slipped, and I fell over against the tractor and knocked all that shafting for a goal. And the babbitt went all over this Wilkins's shoes. Nice new shoes they was, too, that he had told me cost him $4.98, F. O. B. Sears Roebuck.

"So this bird he opens his big mouth, and calls me a poor ham, and he says, 'I asked for a mechanic, and they sent me a damn' fool.'

"Well, sir, I run that old feller around and around that tractor for half an hour, hitting at him with the babbitt ladle, and—"

"Couldn't you find nothing heavier," said Bill, "than a babbitt ladle?"

"It didn't need to be heavy. It was red-hot. And besides I was throwing bolts and nuts and washers and spark plugs and everything else I could pick up. Till finally he just begged for mercy, and I let him be. I remember there was loose tractor parts all over that quarter section. But that was the way to handle him. Me and him was the best of friends after that. He seen he couldn't scare me, and he respected me. I made him chase around in the hot sun and pick up all them stray parts. That's the way to treat these mean babies. Show 'em you ain't afraid of 'em and they'll eat out of your hand."

Luke quit talking and leaned back in the fancy upholstered chair, and lit a cigarette, and looked around at us. And about this time, Jim Swigley must have been halfway up from the station. But we didn't know it.

"YES, sir," said the bird with the red necktie—I forget his name, but he had a loud voice. "That's the way to treat these ornery brutes. I know. I've met 'em. And they don't put no muffler on me. I remember a big mutt of a Swede up in Duluth—"

"Yes," broke in Bill Johnson. "There might be some fairly tough ones in this country, but if you fellers ain't been out of the old U. S. A., you ain't seen anything in the tough line. Wait till they send you off to Africa like they did me. Way back in 1912 it was that I delivered the first Earthworm Tractor sold in the French Congo, and, boys, she was a wild country. Them niggers there was just savages. Cannibals! Put you in a kettle and make soup out of you.

"We had to take the tractor a hundred miles up the river where they had a mine, and there was no steamboats, and no roads. So we took it all apart and loaded it onto native canoes.

"I went along with the motor in a canoe about fifty feet long, hollowed out of a big log. Thirty niggers paddled the thing. Great big mean-looking birds. Cannibals, they was.

"So we went paddling along up this Congo River in the hot sun, and the water was warm and steamy. Along the sides of the river was the jungle, dark and unhealthy-looking. Trees, and bushes, and funny-looking plants with big leaves, and vines and creepers all twisted together so thick that a rabbit couldn't have wiggled through. And the jungle was as warm and steamy as the river.

"I was sitting in the stern of the canoe, and the motor was in the middle, and I was looking at the niggers paddling, when all at once we hit a rock and stove a hole in the boat and started to sink. We couldn't land anywheres because the jungle was too thick.

"I took out my Colt, and started right down that boat, and each nigger I come to, I would make him take off his clothes, which amounted for each one to about as much as a half a Pullman towel. And then I would kick him off into the river. So by the time I had been along the whole boat, which took about thirty seconds, I had enough rags to stuff up the hole, and I had the boat lightened quite a bit. I saved just two niggers, and I gave them my hat and they started taking turns bailing. And what I mean to say is that them cannibals *bailed*. I sat there with my eye on 'em, and every time they slowed up, I would shoot past their face. Yes, they bailed.

"So we drifted back down the river, and when we got to the settlement, the government motor-boat came out and towed us in, and we was all right."

"What," said Luke Torkle, "happened to the ones you threw out of the boat?"

"Oh, I guess they swum ashore, such of 'em as the crocodiles didn't get. But I couldn't help that. They was a wild, mean bunch, and I just had to treat 'em rough."

"That's the way," said the bird with the red necktie. I forget his name, but he had a loud voice. "That's my rule too. The tougher they are, the rougher I treat 'em. I remember a rorty, snorty old Swede I run acrost up in Duluth—"

"Oh, look!" said Luke Torkle.

We looked, and the door had opened a little and a great big mean, ugly face was looking in at us. You've heard about "a skin you love to touch." Well, this could have been advertised as "a face you want to hit." It had about three days' growth of whiskers on it, besides a lot of dirt and grease, and an ugly look.

"WHERE is the president of this works?" it said, and its voice reminded you of feeding time in the lion house at the zoo.

"I don't know," said old Bill.

The owner of the face came in. He was built something like these pictures you see of gorillas. He wasn't more than twice as big as Jack Dempsey, I should say, or this Wild Bull of the Pampas. But he looked wilder. He had on old greasy clothes, a coat like one of those Army trench coats, and big leather boots. One pants leg tucked in a boot and the other out. And if a whale had feet, that would be about the size of this gent's feet. He had engine grease on him, and a lot of mud like he had just come out of the swamps—which we found out later he had.

In his hand was something heavy that he set down kerplunk on the handsome rug. I looked at it and saw it was a cylinder off a tractor. It wasn't wrapped up nor nothing. He had been carrying it in a shawl strap. I think that's what you call it—a couple of straps with a handle. Apparently he had just taken it off of the machine, and here he had dragged it in without washing it off, or cleaning it at all. It was all over oil, and right away as soon as it got in the warm room, the oil begun to drip down and make little puddles on the thousand-dollar rug.

I was going to put the gorilla wise to these puddles, but I looked him over again, and I thought maybe I wouldn't, either. Even the bird with the red necktie wasn't saying anything.

"I want to see the president of this works," said the gorilla. He scowled at us like he expected us to say something, but we didn't say nothing, so he went on. "My name is Jim Swigley, and I come all the way from Mississippi. I called up your

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president from the railroad station. I told him to come over here, and I told him to be damn quick about it."

"Oh!" said Bill. "So he's coming over?"

"He'd better. I told him if he didn't, I'd go up to his house and shoot him out." He opened his coat, and underneath were two revolvers stuck into the top of his trousers, a big one and one not so big.

"The little one is for squirrels and rabbits," he said. "And if any of you crooks tries to get funny, maybe you'll find out what the other one is for." The guy with the red necktie got him a chair and he sat down. He leaned back, and just as he was hoisting his big muddy feet up on the top of the desk, the door opened and in walked Mr. L. L. Mansfield, President and General Manager of the Farmers' Friend Tractor Company, makers of Earthworm Tractors—"There is but one Earthworm. The Farmers' Friend Tractor Company builds it."

Now, L. L. Mansfield was a dignified old gent, and used to being treated very respectful indeed. When he seen this old gorilla in his best chair, scratching up the polish on his desk with them big boots, I thought he was going to blow out a fuse right off.

But the gorilla didn't give him no chance.

"You come right in and sit down and listen to what I got to say and keep your mouth shut until I'm through."

The president began to get red in the face, and took a big breath like he had a lot to say. And I guess he had. But before he said it, he began to notice the size of this brute and the artillery he carried, and finally he sat down.

"What do you wish?" he asked.

"I got one of your tractors. I bought it three months ago. It's no good. It never was no good. And it never will be no good. It's nothing but a bunch of junk. I've written you three letters, and I got no satisfaction. I've seen your little salesman you sent down there, this little George Sherwood, and I couldn't get no satisfaction out of him. I finally run him off the place with my shotgun. And now I've come up here all the way from Mississippi, and by Gosh and just as sure as my name is Jim Swigley, I'll get satisfaction out of you, or I'll wreck your factory."

He took out the largest of the two guns and hit the desk a crack with the handle. "Yes, sir, I'll wreck the joint." And he hit the desk again. Every time he hit, it made a big dent. I could see the president looking at them dents, and it didn't seem to me he was pleased.

SWIGLEY pointed across the room with his gun. "See that cylinder?" he said.

We all looked and the president give a little jump. He seen the cylinder all right, and he also seen what it was doing to the rug. Swigley dragged his feet off the desk, gouging big grooves in the polished surface with his hob nails.

"Come over here," he said, "and don't sit there looking like a fool. Come here." The president went over. "Run your hand over that,"—and he made the president feel of the inside. "Scored up. Worn out. Ruined. And why?"

"Probably insufficient lubrication."

"What? What? What?"

"Well—of course—"

"Yes, I guess you better say 'well,' and hum and haw. And don't let me hear any more about 'insufficient lubrication.' That's all you birds know: 'Insufficient lubrication.' Makes me sick. Why, I change the oil every day. In the crankcase and transmission both, and all the bearings in all the rollers and everywhere else. I have three niggers doing nothing else but oil that machine. And here you say I don't lubricate it. Call me a liar, will you?" He stuck his face about an inch from the president's. "Call me a liar, will you?"

"No, indeed, sir, you misunderstand me. I have no doubt that your care of this machine is excellent. I was just wondering—"

"Wondering, was you? Well, you don't have to wonder no more. I'll tell you. Your machine is no good—rotten. It's junk. You claim to build a tractor. And you have the nerve to sell it to honest people. You ought to be in jail. That tractor ain't built, it's just throwed together. You get a lot of stove iron from some junk yard, throw it together, ship it out, and swindle somebody into paying real United States money for it. Then you say you 'wonder' what's the matter with it. You 'wonder' why it starts to fall apart right away." Bang, went the butt of the gun on the desk.

"And you have the nerve to tell me it's

insufficient lubrication." Bang on the desk again. "That's all you know. And look here." He reached down in his pocket, brought up a lot of oily fragments, and slapped them on the desk. Four or five little steel balls went rolling off in different directions. "That's a ball bearing from what you call your transmission. Look at it! Been used three weeks and simply fallen apart, burnt up, come to pieces, gone to hell, rotten, rotten. Not lubricated? Why, man, look at it! It's just dripping with oil right now." Yes, it was dripping all right, all over the desk.

"And look here." He went down in his pockets again, brought up a double handful of old broken washers, castings, bushings, and other junk, and rolled and dragged them around over the shiny mahogany. "All of them defective material. Rotten, busted up, full of sand holes and air holes, no good, no account, no use."

The president started to say something, but he didn't get no chance.

"WAIT a minute, wait a minute!" Bang went the butt on the desk. "I'll tell you what I'm going to do. And I want to tell you I mean what I say. My name is Jim Swigley, and I always do what I say I will. I come from the Yazoo Delta. I come from Bluefield, the Queen City of the Delta. I come from a real he-man country. Down there we shoot a man for pulling off anything so low down as what you pulled off on me when you sold me that bunch of junk. But I'll go easy with you. I'll give you one more chance.

"I came all the way up here to have this out with you people. I came all the way from Mississippi, and I won't go back until you make it right. I brought part of the stuff with me. Look it over. It's defective. Anybody can see that. Cheap stuff, full of flaws, low quality, no good, rotten—rotten! All right, I want you to come right down into your place where you keep your spare parts, and get out this order for me. I want you to give it to me free—I ain't going to pay one cent for it. And I want you to send it down to the station right off in your truck so I can see it is shipped myself. I won't stand for no foolishness."

"Is there much material you will need?" said the president politely.

"Oh, not a great deal." He took out a dirty hunk of paper and began to read. "Four cylinders, four cylinder heads, four cylinder-head gaskets, eight valves, eight valve springs, eight valve-spring keepers, sixteen split collars, one crank shaft, eight connecting-rod bushing halves, eight laminated shims, four pistons, twelve rings, four piston pins, four piston-pin bushings, one motor-oil pump complete, one—"

"Is there much more?" said the president.

"No, that's all for the motor except a fan belt and upper and lower radiator hose, and points for the magneto. Then I want a complete set of clutch discs—the others simply wore out in no time at all—and one bevel pinion, one bevel gear, two final-drive pinions, and all them roller bearings in the transmission, with washers, and some more little junk. Here's the list. Oh, yes, and pins and bushings for the track."

The president looked at Swigley. He looked at us. Finally he seemed to get an idea.

"Our service engineer is the man who passes on these matters," he said. "I will refer the question to him at the earliest possible moment."

"I want action. And I want it now, see?"

"Unfortunately our service engineer is at present out of town; however—"

"Say, can that stuff! You heard what I said the first time I said it. You're the president of this works, ain't you? You can give me satisfaction if you want to. All right, will you do it? Or will I wreck the joint?"

The president looked sort of helpless for a minute, and then hit on another idea. "I can assure you, Mr. Swigley," he said, "that it is our earnest desire to be perfectly fair with all our customers. And now that I see what an urgent case this is, I believe we can take some action at once. Fortunately, we have with us several of our expert mechanics, and we can get their opinion on this material." So he calls over the guy with the red necktie. I forget his name, but he had a loud voice.

"What is your opinion as to this cylinder?"

The guy with the red necktie stepped up and took a long look at the cylinder, and felt of it, and looked wise, and then took a sort of side squint at Jim Swigley and the two guns.

"I think," he said—and his voice was

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soft and gentle—"that this cylinder is defective. Yes, poor material. The—the heat treatment must 'a' been wrong, or something. Oh, yes, very defective. Probably the defectivest cylinder I ever run across, sir."

The guy with the red necktie sort of sidled off back into the corner of the room, and it may have been imagination, but it seemed to me that the president give him a kind of a dirty look.

"Well, Johnson," said the president, "What do you think? And you, Torkle?"

Bill and Luke stepped up, looking straight at the cylinder, and sidewise at the artillery.

"Better give him a free replacement," said Bill.

"Yes, sir," said Luke, "I think so, too."

The president scowled for a minute, and then decided to make the best of it. "Let me see your list," he said.

Jim handed it over. The president began to read it. Nobody said a word, and the room was very quiet.

ALL at once Sammy Simpson's weak little voice piped up. "Oh, look! Oh, look!" We turned around, and there was Sammy rubbing away at the top of the cylinder with his handkerchief. Sammy was such a quiet, insignificant little toad that we had forgotten he was there.

"Who are you?" asked the president.

"Sam Simpson."

"You work for the company?"

"I've been a service man for two years."

"Well, you must do your work pretty quietly; I don't seem to remember you at all. What is it you want?"

"Look," said Sam. We gathered around the cylinder, and on the smooth machined top was stamped, "R. M. Co. 1917."

"You have another tractor besides the one you bought from us, haven't you, Mr. Swigley?" said Sam.

"Yes," said Jim, "but—" He stopped.

"Sure," said Sam. "During the war the Army needed more Earthworm Tractors than we could make. So several automobile companies were licensed to manufacture them from our designs. And after the war, when the Army had more tractors than it could use, it transferred a lot of them to the state and county road commissions. This cylinder is from a tractor made by the Rex Motor Company in 1917. You probably got it from the Mississippi State Highway Commission."

"You're a liar," shouted Swigley. "I got it from the county."

"All right," said Sammy politely, "you got it from the county. And it's seven years old. This company never made it or had anything to do with making it. And you want us to give you free repairs for it. Is that right?"

Swigley came across the room a-snarling and a-growling. "Don't get funny with me, young feller," he said. "I'd shoot you as quick as I would a nigger or a rabbit."

"No, you wouldn't," said Sammy, "because you got too much sense. It wouldn't do you no good, and they would put you in jail and probably hang you later on. You wouldn't want them to do that. You don't want to shoot me—and you know it, and I know it. So why discuss it? Let's take another look at this cylinder."

We gathered around to get another squint at the letters, and all at once the door banged, and we looked up, and the demon of the swamps was gone. Sneaked out on us, by Gosh.

For a minute nobody said a word.

Then the president took out his watch. "Must be going," he said. "Due at the country club an hour ago." He hurried out.

The bird with the red necktie took a big breath. I forget his name, but he had a loud voice. "These hard-boiled sons of guns can't fool me," he said. "I could see through this one right from the start."

"Me too," said old Bill Johnson.

"I knew he was a fake," said Luke Torkle, "even before we found the mark on the cylinder. I've met a lot of these hard-boiled birds, and they can't slip nothing over on me."

SAMMY took me by the arm and we started home. As we went down the hall, we could hear the guy with the red necktie: "Well, sir, when it comes to handling tough customers, there is nobody can beat me. They never try to get fresh with me more than once. I remember a hard-boiled Swede up in Duluth—" But we didn't wait to hear any more.

There is lots of noise in the tractor business.

A Novel of the New and Old West

The Devonshers

Startling Testimony from the Defendant Brings the Murder Case of the State vs. *Eve Devonsher to Its Culmination*

By Honoré Willsie Morrow

Illustrations by Ernest Fuhr

Begin this serial with any instalment. The story up to this point is here.

“WHEN the man to whom I was engaged evaded the draft, a sense that an unchangeable Fate hounded Carter Devonsher's descendants, almost submerged me. But I dared to hope until I found him cheating in horse flesh. Then something more than rage began to burn within me. When Minnie Duncan drove me from the Red Cross meeting, it was as if the hand of that same Fate had scourged me forth. I made my plans for France.”

So testified Eve Devonsher in her trial for the murder of Angus Duncan.

It was a few weeks after her departure that Minnie's husband Angus was found dead in his branding corral. The fatal bullet came from a .44 rifle—an unusual bore, of which Eve was known to own one. And when she was discovered in camp on a disused trail suspicion attached to her, a person of a hot temper who was known to have quarreled bitterly with Angus. Sheriff Brownell brought her back to Antelope Basin and Judge Jones announced his determination to bring her to trial, and in effect the whole Devonsher family from her grandfather Carter down. For he was one of many who felt that the murder was the climax of a dissension in Antelope Basin which began in the early days of the Oregon country, a pernicious dissension in which a large part of the community stood ranged against the Devonshers. And so attorneys were named—Colonel Johnson for the State and Jim Poindexter for the defense—and they proceeded to the selection of a jury while Eve, a daughter of the old West who who could not bear confinement, languished in jail.

The only thing that made it at all tolerable was the devoted friendship of Peter Colbaith, major in the British army. Permanently crippled in the World War, he had been detailed to visit America to buy horses for the Allies; and his search for the best had led him to Antelope Basin and the Devonsher breed of Arabians—a breed of long standing, kept up under difficulties by Dave Devonsher (now dead) and his daughter Eve. Peter ran against a general disposition to profiteer and Eve, the only person who saw the deep importance of the war to America, went among the ranchers, trying with small success to persuade them to make reasonable prices.

The unusual trial proceeded, with many revelations indicating first that Carter Devonsher had abused the privileges of his office as governor of the Oregon country for the English Hudson's Bay Company (he was succeeded, strangely, by Major Colbaith's grandfather, Sir John Colbaith), and that Carter, to revenge himself, had brought about the assertion of American claims, laying himself open to the charge of treachery to England. Ever since, moreover, the Devonshers had submitted to a dragging blackmail by Carter's ex-employee Hugh Duncan and his descendants—to which, lately, was added an independent blackmail by Henry Worth, the quarter-breed saloon-keeper and coroner. In spite of this they remained the most highly gifted and most important family in the community of Antelope Basin that grew up where Carter had settled.

Witnesses testified regarding all phases of the Devonshers' relation to the community, from the oldest, Tom Maine, who as a boy had witnessed a duel between Carter Devonsher and Sir John Colbaith, to the most recent member of the community, Sir John's grandson Peter. Finally Eve herself was called to the stand. At Major Colbaith's urging, and contrary to the advice of her counsel, she proceeded to tell all that she knew of her family's difficulties, concealing nothing.

"I made my plans for France," she said after telling of the break with her fiancé, Howard Freeman. But I had no intention of going to France till I'd fulfilled my obligation to Major Colbaith. He did not know that I felt any obligation. He does not know yet what my intention was. But I planned to round up the horses that had been stolen from my stud and sell them to the British Army, giving to the ranchers from whom I took them every cent I received for their sale."

EVE paused, turning toward Judge Jones. He was sitting with his head craned toward her, his one eye blinking rapidly, his lips slightly parted as if he were watching the most exciting rodeo of his experience. As she turned from the jury to face him, the judge twisted his whiskers till the flesh lifted from his chin, and when Jim Poindexter jerked himself out of his chair, he snarled:

"Quiet, Jim!"

There was a low staccato murmur over the room as if each spectator had uttered an ejaculation, then stilled it lest some single word of Eve's be lost. Old Mrs. Sherman took off her spectacles as though to aid her hearing.

Her father's twisted smile was on Eve's white lips. She swallowed once or twice, then went on steadily.

"You see, there was rather an impressive list of horses fraudulently derived from my steed. Bear Folsom had three. Angus Duncan had five. Johnny Argyle had two, and so on. Dick Folsom and I, a couple of years ago, spent an interesting summer looking up the pedigree of the horses of Antelope Basin. We concluded that my father and I had indulged in involuntary charitable work to the sum of about ten thousand dollars' worth of horse flesh. I took this list with me when I started for France.

"I went first of all to the Cedar Ring camping place and made my camp. Then I explored the old slide that had blocked the creek. I found that the creek had hollowed out a tunnel under the slide through which one could with a good deal of care lead a horse. On the other side of the slide the old Mormon trail led down into Utah. I found that a little band of Uintah Indians had made a summer camp about twenty miles down the trail from the Utah side of the slide. I stopped at this camp for dinner and to see if I could get the sort of help I needed.

"THEY had the usual run of half-starved ponies for the ruck of the tribe, but in a corral separated from the other horses was a string of tall, rangy saddle horses that interested me. The squaw who was letting me cook dinner on her fire told me that they belonged to Chief Hornet. I made her repeat the name two or three times, for it seemed to me that the hand of Fate must be on me. Chief Hornet was one of the Indians who pursued my father and had shot at him.

"After I had eaten my dinner I went over to the chief's tepee. He was sitting on the ground with his back against an aspen, a smooth-faced Indian of about sixty. He gave me a curious slow look as I came up to him. I knew that within thirty seconds he had located me as to paternity and place. But I made no mention of ever having seen him before or of having heard of him. The personal thing in me, the hatred and horror of the men who had ended David Devonsher's career had all merged into a greater horror—against the men who could bleed a nation for overpay for a horse. No, it was a bigger horror than that—against a social order that could destroy the things it should have loved. Old Chief Hornet was to me an instrument offered by the Fate that controlled me.

"I sat down beside one of his squaws who was plaiting a lariat and asked him if he would rent me his corral for a week. I told him that I was bringing some horses down from Wyoming within that time and I asked him if he knew where there was a good market.

"He asked me, 'Why don't you sell your horses in Wyoming?'

" 'I could,' I said, 'if only I could get a good man to handle them for me. But the horses must be taken to Cheyenne, via Salt Lake City or some other well-known Utah town.'

" 'What kind of horses?' grunted old Hornet.

" 'Only the Devonsher-Arabian strain,' I answered. Then I added, nodding toward a big white gelding in his corral, 'Out of Devonsher's Sheik.'

"He grinned and asked me if we still raised horses. Then, as if some superior being had ordered me to do so, I began to tell that old horse-running Indian the story of the Devonsher horses. He listened without blinking an eye.

"When I had finished he must have sat staring at his corral for five minutes before he said:

" 'My two sons have gone to France. I will take your horses to Cheyenne for you.'

" 'How much pay would you want?' I asked.

"He gave me a slow look. 'You tell your father's spirit to let my horses alone. I can't sell 'em. They all die when they leave my corral. No one will buy. I raise just for myself and my boys. Your father's spirit tells me to. You make him let my horses alone. All the horses in this tribe he makes sickly.'

" 'If you'll sell them to the man I shall sell to,' I told him, 'they will go to France where your sons are helping to end the Great War. I'm sure that would satisfy my father.'

" 'All of 'em?' asked Hornet.

" 'All of them,' I insisted.

"He considered this in his deliberate fashion; then he said: 'All right. I'll do it. I don't want pay.'

"It seemed almost too simple. 'You must let me put the price on the horses,' I insisted. 'You must behave better than the white men have.'

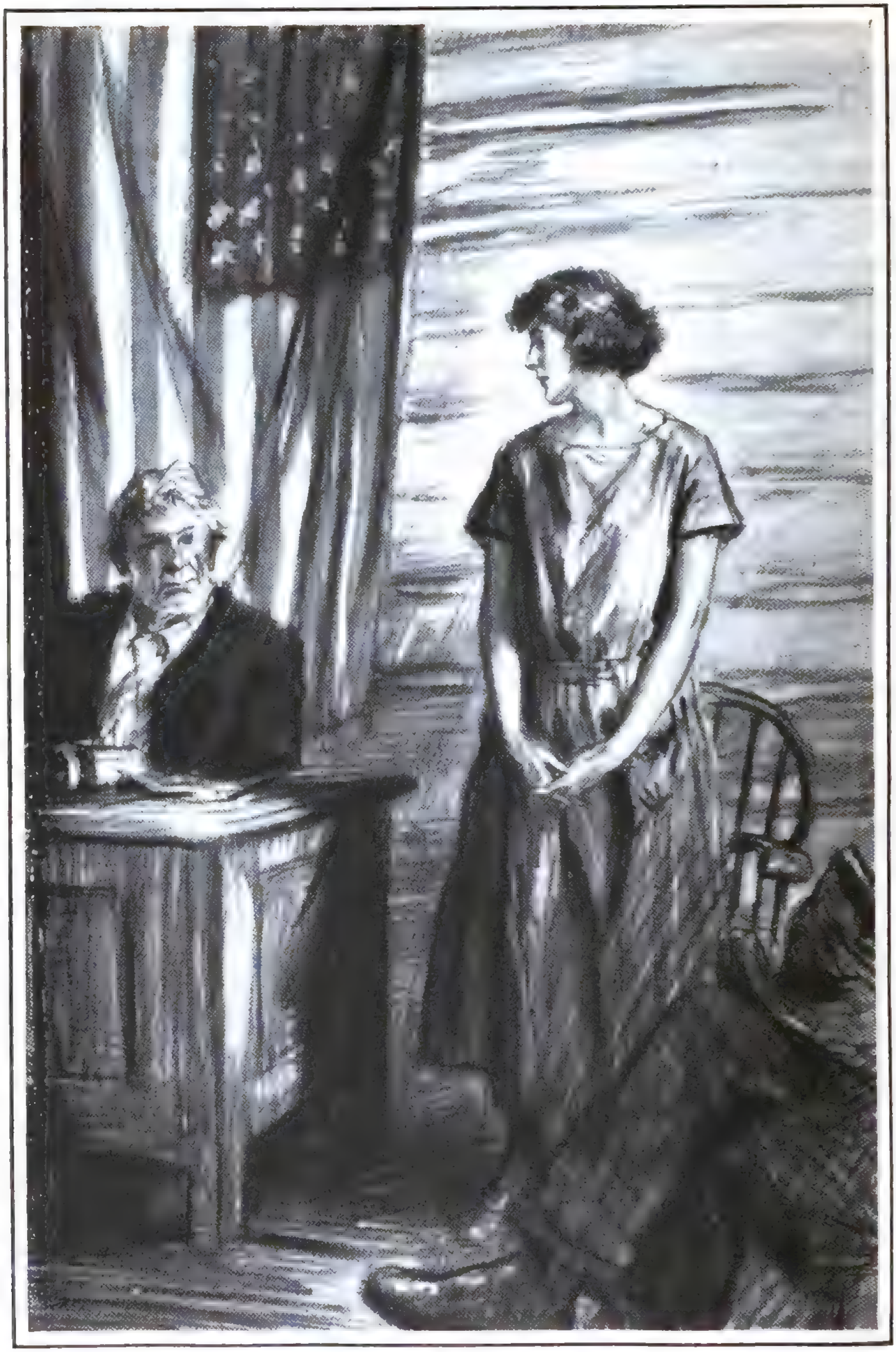
" 'All right!' he grunted.

"And so the bargain was struck."

EVE now was addressing the wide-eyed jury. "Of course, the essence of my success lay in rapidity of movement, in knowing exactly where I was going and what I wanted. Well, that was simple enough. I knew perfectly well the particular horses I had a right to take. The ranches on which the horses were located were adjacent to one another. I had no intention of using the difficult trail that Sid Brownell knew to the Cedar Ring. I planned to use and did use the old Mormon trail through the south end of Bear Folsom's ranch, striking just beyond there into the bed of Gray Bull Creek, perhaps ten miles longer than the old trail, but hard gravel all the way to the very point where it comes from under the slide.

"I struck quickly and by myself. Old Hornet waited for me at the Cedar Ring. I gathered up twenty horses in a single night and by the next afternoon we were working them through the tunnel and down toward the Indians' camp. Once they were safe in the corral, I told the chief to rebrand and to let them rest for a day while I went back to Antelope Basin. I wanted"—Eve drew a great breath—"I wanted the horses that the Duncans had blackmailed out of the Devonshers. They were mine and my father's. And it was my grandfather who had bred the wickedness in the Duncans. If anything, any portion of the ill-begotten, ill-stolen goods could be sacrificed on a great altar, surely, surely that would be righteousness following out of evil. I had sweated blood to make them repay in a legitimate manner. They had refused. And now I felt like the instrument of the Almighty to make them pay without the pale of the law! The Duncans and the Worths and the Devonshers had been the tools and the materials of malevolence too long. The circles that had spread from the pebbles dropped by my grandfather were traveling too widely. And there was only I to expiate. Only I!

"It was moon-up when I reached the aspen grove above the Duncans' ranch house. The tree trunks were silver-green against black with a square of orange light in the living-room window. It was long



Eve turned. "What happens to me now?" she asked. The judge replied huskily, "Your counsel will now have opportunity to plead for leniency if he wishes."

after ten o'clock but Angus and Minnie were not in bed as I'd expected them to be with Angus half dead after the spring plowing. Instead, they were standing by the corral gate quarreling.

"'You can't take them up there tonight,' I heard Minnie say. 'You're too tired yourself and it ain't safe for the horses with this thief working round.'

"'That's exactly why I'm putting them up there, you fool,' Angus said. 'I'm going to take a gun with me and watch. There's money in it for the fellow that catches this thief. The horses are bait.'

"'Money! Money! Don't you give a thought to anything but money?' Minnie's voice carried like a file on a saw blade. 'Don't you realize that the man that's gotten away with those horses is smart and he's desperate, besides? If you go up there, I'm going with you.'

"'Oh, no, you aren't! You'd squeal and spoil the game. You'll stay at home.'

"THEY argued for a long time. I could not hear all they said, for Angus was moving to and fro from house to corral, Minnie following him, crying and protesting. At last I saw him leading his horses through the trees and I followed him.

"He took a long time working up to the old corral. I stopped about five hundred feet below the lower fence, in a clump of cedars. It was nearly midnight, I think, by then. Rex, the dog, padded down to my station, barking, but I whispered to him and he sniffed at me, knew me and went away. I heard him later barking at the moon, I suppose. Angus must have silenced him and tied him up, for I heard nothing more of him until considerably later.

"The old branding corral fence is in bad trim. Angus evidently hobbled his horses, then worked around the fence, lifting the rails into place. At least I suppose that was what he was doing when one of his horses broke out of the corral, hobble and all, and started with the heavy thud of a hobbled horse down my side of the slope, which was the direct line back to Antelope Basin. As the horse lunged past my post I roped it. It was difficult, for the moonlight was almost gone. But I caught it round the hind legs and it fell heavily and lay groaning. I ran up to see what I had got. It was the Princess horse."

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Eve, eyes blazing, lifted herself from her chair with trembling brown hands pushing heavily against the wooden arms. She was talking to Mrs. Sherman now.

"It was the Princess horse, in foal. The fool had brought her up the mountain-side. He had hobbled her and had let her run in hobbles. And I, *I* had thrown her! She lifted her head and nickered between groans when I came up to her. Then Angus came thundering and cursing down on us.

"'Who the— What the—' He had me covered with his gun as he shouted.

"'You get down and help with this horse as quick as the Lord will let you!' I said.

"I think at the sound of my voice he fell out of his saddle.

"'Eve! Aren't you in France? What—'

"'What are you doing with my mare up here?' I demanded.

"'Your mother sold her to me,' he said.

"'You are a miserable, blackmailing liar!' I said. And that was as near as I came to cursing him. Curses are nothing. I wanted to kill him. 'Get up and help me with this mare,' I ordered. He obeyed me immediately.

"WE DID what we could for her. It was pitiable. Angus at intervals tried excitedly to explain his having her and mixed his explanations with demands of how I came to be there. I did not trouble myself to speak to him, except to give orders about the mare. He still was talking, demanding, threatening when Rex, in the corral, set up a great barking and Angus bolted up the hill. I heard him riding furiously about; then he came storming down again.

"'Some one's run that stallion and two mares of mine, right under my eyes,' he roared.

"Why he hadn't followed at once I didn't know. But I had no time to wonder about it for at this moment Henry Worth's face appeared in the light of the fire we'd kindled.

"'My lord, Angus! What have you lighted that fire for? Advertising your date with me? . . . Eve! It's Eve Devonsher!' His jaw dropped, although I supposed he'd been watching us until he knew exactly who we were and what was going on.

"'Where'd you leave your wagon, Henry!' demanded Angus.

"'Out of sight and hearing of this fire, naturally!' Henry answered with that pleasant smile of his.

" 'You stay here with Eve, Henry,' said Angus hurriedly, 'while I go after those horses!'

" 'If I stay, you stay,' returned Henry. He was carrying his .44 carelessly under his arm.

"Angus muttered something but he dismounted slowly. . . . The colt died. But the Princess horse, although she was a very sick pony, came through better than one could have thought possible at first. But I could have wept my heart out over the loss of the colt. It was so unnecessary, so—" Eve paused as though words failed her, then she stumbled on. "When everything had been done that could be done, I told Henry to get the mare when he could down to the tavern stables, and to deliver her when she was in good trim again to Major Colbaith in Cheyenne.

"I didn't ask him to keep his mouth shut. I believed he would because he'd feel he had a hold on me as long as he did so. And one would never ask a promise of a blackmailer, anyhow.

"Angus, when I gave Henry this order, roared like the bull of Bashan. Henry gave him his pleasant smile. 'Justice comes once in a while, you see,' he said to Angus.

" 'We'll see! We'll see!' Angus shouted. And he started off up toward the corral. 'Rex and I have a trick or two, ourselves.'

"Henry spurred after him. And a moment later I mounted and followed. I'd not done with Angus. I was not off my head in the least, in spite of all that's been said about my hot temper. But somehow I was going to settle with Angus before that night was ended. How, I did not know. But I had the accumulation of three generations of indignation and disgust welling up in my brain.

"Dawn was growing. Angus was standing in the middle of the corral, holding Rex by the collar. Henry was sitting on his horse, not a yard away. They were having a frightful argument over the Princess horse. I drew up near the fence and waited. As I listened a great sense of nausea came over me. I suddenly loathed myself for listening to the two men, for wanting to punish a thing as low as Angus. And I lifted the reins on Shawnee's neck. But before he could move, a trembling, drooping mare dragged itself into the corral. It was the Princess horse looking for human society. She walked slowly over to Angus and the dog, and nuzzled the man's shoulder."

Eve took a step toward the jury. "Angus kicked her," she half whispered. "Kicked her in the groin. I raised the .44 and fired at him. I thought I'd only singed him, for he ran toward me folding his arms before his face. I saw Henry reach for the Princess horse's bridle, so I knew he'd care for her. And I turned Shawnee and galloped away. I wished I had killed Angus, but I didn't believe that I'd more than pinked him until Judge Jones told me in my Cedar Ring camp two days later that he was dead."

Eve stood staring with unseeing eyes at Mrs. Sherman. There was a little rustling sound across the room. Mary Devonsher had fainted. Peter picked her up and in a dead silence limped out of the courtroom with the frail body across his chest. Eve did not so much as glance in their direction. If there was any unity of thought in the room it was expressed by the look of bewilderment on every face. Eve herself turned with stunned, dead eyes toward Judge Jones.

"What happens to me now?" she asked in a low voice.

The judge, his face twitching, replied huskily, "Your counsel will now have an opportunity to plead for leniency if he wishes."

Jim Poindexter rose, and for a moment she and the white-haired lawyer faced each other.

"Eve! Eve! You should have confided in me!" he groaned.

Eve made no defense as to this. But she said: "Uncle Jim, there's no use in your saying anything more. Judge Jones will act as he sees fit."

"Sit down, Eve!" said Poindexter.

Eve, who had not been conscious of standing, found herself sinking gratefully into her chair. She was shaking almost uncontrollably but her brain was clear and suddenly very cold.

"YOUR Honor," began Poindexter, "I am an old man like yourself. I have given like you practically all my years of manhood to the practise of law. Yet I never before have defended a client whose case made so deep an impression on the minds of all who have heard its many ramifications. The personality of the defendant and her history are such that even the prosecuting attorney has at times shown eyes suffused with tears.

"Your Honor, there is no one in Wyoming who holds the reputation that you do for upholding and rendering justice. And it is noteworthy that you accomplish your ends by as frugal an enforcing of the law as is consistent with your position as a jurist of the first water. In other words, you have found that justice is not always produced by the policing of the very minds of people. Your method of conducting this case illustrates perfectly your cast of mind. And the result produced by allowing the defendant to hear the freely expressed opinions of her neighbors has proved that your understanding of human nature is very great. You have laid truth bare to the public gaze by casting legal conventions to the winds. It remains now for you to measure punishment as exactly as you have measured the sensitive conscience of the defendant."

He turned abruptly to the jury.

"I ask you, members of the jury, to allow this woman to go free. I ask it though I realize with as bitter regrets as you that she killed Angus Duncan and that, as accessory to the crime, she took horses which she admitted she could not prove were hers. Consider, if you please, the provocation. She herself has presented that to you as I cannot hope to present it. The long years of poverty, the unspeakable meanness of the murdered man, of Minnie Duncan and of Mrs. Brownell, the tortured pride, the great love for her father, whose good name she longed so passionately to restore, the as great love for her mother, whose peace of mind she fought so blindly to maintain against the blackguards who already had destroyed that peace of mind. Consider Miss Devonsher's attitude toward her neighbors, her dedication of herself to their service, and mark in all that she has said the decent moderation she maintained in judging even Angus Duncan, until the very last. And the last! Members of the jury, didn't your blood boil with hers when you saw that brutal boot raised against the high-strung animal that the owner of the boot had despoiled of normal motherhood! By the eternal, I tell you that I believe that every demand of highest justice will be satisfied if you will send this girl home to her mother tonight, to sleep under the roof where she was born."

POINDEXTER stopped and dropped into his chair. He was too agitated to continue. Eve sat with her hand over her eyes. Judge Jones turned an inquiring eye on Colonel Johnson. The colonel rose, clearing his throat.

"Your Honor, in spite of the attitude toward the prisoner that I have maintained throughout this trial, I have not been devoid of sympathy for her. In fact, my sympathy for her has increased from the moment poor Tom Maine finished his astounding picture of the Devonsher heritage of weakness and foolish pride. But, sir, murder is the ultimate crime against society and this woman by her own admission murdered Angus Duncan. Not in a moment of sudden aberration. By her own account her mind was clear and during the period from slightly after midnight until the actual shot was fired at dawn she planned to kill him.

"Sir, I will admit that I have been bitterly and adversely critical of the manner in which you have conducted this trial. I now wish to congratulate you on the acumen with which you have brought forth the apparently irrelevant matter which has had such a wholesome and laudatory effect on the mind of the prisoner. At the same time, the evidence has had the effect on me of confirming my belief that the greater the degree of intelligence, the more stringent should be the punishment on the perpetrator of a crime.

"All the evidence offered has gone to prove Miss Devonsher to be a person of high intelligence, of extraordinary will power, of just, even tender conscience. Yet it never seemed to occur to her that her proper recourse in controlling Angus Duncan was the law. She did, I believe, state that she thought of going to your Honor but disregarded the idea because of what she was pleased to consider your too greatly judicial mind. Her point of view is no better than that of Lee Fu, the Chinaman whose philosophy expressed on the witness stand is that of an archaic civilization.

"No! Miss Devonsher chose to administer capital punishment for that which was not a crime and to let go unpunished for years crimes for which the law provides a long prison term. Her attitude of mind is unsafe and inexcusable. My respected confrère demands freedom for this murderer. I am astounded! Why should she go free? She killed an unarmed man, not in self-defense but to punish him for kicking a horse! Not in fear or panic or in an overwhelming brain-storm, because he had insulted her or her family or was pursuing her with attentions that were loathsome to her. She shot him because he kicked a horse! Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, shall you allow this woman, because she is the descendant of a distinguished English traitor, because she is the daughter of a horse thief, because she has held your form of patriotism in contempt—for all these reasons, shall you allow her to go unpunished? These, at least, are the only reasons advanced by the distinguished lawyer for the defense for not allowing the law to have its way with a person who has committed murder.

"Your Honor, I ask you to instruct the jury to bring in a verdict of second degree murder. I ask it of you that it may not be said that the law of the land goes begging when a woman is concerned, particularly a woman who is not of the common American democracy, a citizen of the people, but who is classed as a so-called aristocrat, that epithet so abhorrent to a free mind. I ask it of you that justice may be done and that the unborn child of Minnie Duncan may not be born into a town where the murderer of its father walks free and unpunished for the crime."

COLONEL JOHNSON seated himself neatly in his chair. A hoarse murmur surged through the room. Judge Jones, white to the very lips, brought his gavel down and turned to address the jury.

"Members of the jury, you have had placed before you a remarkable collection of evidence, much of it, as the district attorney has suggested, seeming at the time to be largely irrelevant. Yet I direct you, in considering the degree of punishment to be visited on the defendant, to analyze carefully all the mass of evidence which the court allowed.

"There are many cases in law where nothing could be more pervasive of justice than to allow the detailed history of the defendant and the defandant's ancestry to be discussed as I have allowed it here. But in this case, you undoubtedly realize that not only the prisoner but Antelope Basin itself was on trial, because Antelope Basin must hold itself responsible for what it has made of Eve Devonsher and Eve Devonsher must never forget what her grandfather made of Antelope Basin. It was Carter Devonsher who made blackmailers of the Duncans. It was the Duncans who made a murderer of Eve Devonsher.

"No important act of the latter part of Carter Devonsher's life seems to have been unrelated to the shooting of Angus Duncan by his granddaughter on the morning of May twenty-fifth. He was false to his British citizenship. He obtained vast holdings here, fraudulently. He was false to his marriage vows. Not, as I read any of these, because he was inherently crooked but because he was consumed with pride and personal ambition. Having done these things, had he stood up to them, had he faced their consequences, assuming as his own responsibility whatever was due him for wrongdoing, he would have blocked the progress of the evil he had projected.

"But Carter Devonsher chose to make another man stand sponsor for his marital infidelity. He chose to give up his British citizenship in exchange for a hundred thousand acres of land and no citizenship, and he chose to buy from another man fidelity to his own infidelity. His secret cowardice made crooks of three generations of Duncans. It made a sneaking blackmailer of an otherwise good citizen, Henry Worth. It wrecked David Devonsher, unstable at best, and it hounded Eve Devonsher until, in spite of her mother's strength in her, she murdered the grandson of the first blackmailer who had been the cat's-paw of her grandfather.

"Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, you must not fail in your consideration of this case to study these facts and to take them into account when returning your verdict. A criminal is not made overnight. Mrs. Brownell planted the first impulse for murder in Eve Devonsher when she taught her daughter to call Eve 'the horse thief's daughter.' For the sixteen years following her father's death, Antelope Basin has done what it could to cause Eve Devonsher to shoot Angus Duncan in the old branding corral.

"And yet I shall direct you to bring in against the defendant a verdict of manslaughter!"

The old man paused and turned to look at Eve. She still sat motionless, her hand over her eyes. Leaning forward with his lean hands grasping the desk, his face twitching, tears working slowly, unheeded, from his fierce gray eye, the judge went on to the jury.

"Not one of you but knows the high esteem in which I hold the prisoner. Hold, not held, I say. She is fine. She is brave as it seldom is given women or men to be fine and brave. She is honorable as few human beings have strength to be honorable. Yet she killed a man and she must be punished. But, because of all that went before the killing, I direct you to bring a verdict not for murder but for manslaughter.

"Sheriff, take the jury to my office. Court will take recess."

EVE looked up into Jim Poindexter's face. Without a word, he lifted her to her feet and with one great arm about her, walked with her into her cell.

When she was seated on her cot he said gently: "Eve! Eve! You didn't treat me right. I could have saved you all this long siege, at least, had I known the facts."

"Uncle Jim," said Eve, "I hadn't the slightest intention of letting facts be known until this noon. It was Peter who persuaded me."

"Did you confide in him?"—in astonishment and resentment.

"Certainly not. He merely wanted me to refute the various statements that had been made on the witness stand. I promised him to tell the truth. I did it."

"You mean *that* was your motive?"

Eve nodded wearily.

"And all Judge Jones's vast system of psychological reaction on you went for nothing! Eve, if I weren't so sick at heart I'd say there was humor in that!"

"I don't know what there is in it." Eve looked up into Jim's face miserably. "I did it for Peter."

Jim ran his fingers through his hair, which already lay in a thousand different directions. "Eve, no man is worth it!"

Eve did not reply.

Jim took a turn or two up and down the cell. "I imagine the jury will be at it most of the night."

"In that case," said Eve, "I'd be glad if you'd leave me to rest for an hour or two, Uncle Jim." Then she exclaimed with sudden anxiety, "I wonder where my mother is!"

"I'll go find out!" The lawyer moved toward the door with alacrity. As he opened it a bell began to toll. "Tom Maine's funeral service," said Jim. "He's to go back up to the Wind River country for burial and they've got to hustle the old boy through."

"If Sid sings 'The Oregon Trail' where I can hear it, I shall go mad!" exclaimed Eve.

"The services are in the Plaza. Too many folks for the church." Jim looked up at the window. "And there is no sash up there to close. Shall you really mind so much, Eve?"

Eve managed a wan smile. "Nothing matters much, Uncle Jim. I shan't go melancholy-mad like Henry Worth, anyhow."

Poindexter went slowly down the passageway.

Eve lay down and stared at the ceiling. She could hear the murmur of voices in the judge's office. She could hear through the window the many sounds that told of the gathering for the old fur trapper's funeral. This would be a long affair, she knew, with many speeches of a reminiscent order. Once she would have been keenly alive to the historical value of such a meeting. Now it was as if faint sounds reached dead ears from another life. For all Eve's mind was concentrated not on the findings of the jury—what difference did the number of years make to her—but on Peter. Where was he? What did he think of her now?

She had not long to wait, for it was Peter who completed Jim Poindexter's errand. He came in quietly and stood looking down at Eve as she sat rigidly waiting for him to speak.

"Your mother is in bed with a heart attack. Doc Peabody is with her and she is coming round nicely. She sends you her love." Peter's words dragged interminably. He felt as though he were struggling to speak in a nightmare.

"Thank you!" Then Eve sat with bowed head, waiting.

Peter began to pace the cell. "You were magnificently brave," he said slowly. "Your confession is almost unbelievable to me. I thought that when you told the jury your true life history they would free you. I never for one moment thought you guilty."

Eve tried to straighten her drooping back. But the effort was too great and she drooped again. It seemed to her that even her parched tongue was weary. Her very hands, relaxed in her lap, were tired, tired. An insipid line from a school reader repeated itself constantly in her mind.

Soldier, rest, thy warfare o'er,
Sleep the sleep that knows not waking. . .

"No," she told herself, "that is scarcely appropriate. Why not Kipling?

"We have strawed our best to the weeds' unrest
To the shark and the sheering gull.
If blood be the price of admiralty—

"'Admiralty!'" she whispered bitterly to herself. "Admiralty over a cell or over six feet of brown clay up on the shoulder of Gray Bull!"

The murmur of many voices floated through the window from the Plaza with the thousand green motes that tinged the westering light in the cell. How old Peter looked! She never had seen his shoulders droop so, nor noted that his limp was so pronounced. Why did they toll that dreary bell so long? Surely some kindly soul in the free air ought to realize how dreadful a sound it seemed to her in her cell. So Peter had not guessed that she was guilty! That was what made it possible for his pity to grow into love. Well, she would put an end to his mortification as quickly as she could.

"Peter," she said, "if you'd sit by me here, I could talk better to you."

PETER obediently sat down beside her, and clasping his hands over his knees, he said, slowly but evenly: "I think that your sentence will be very light; and Poindexter says that the governor of Wyoming is his most intimate friend, and he is sure that after a year or so he can obtain a pardon for you. I shall have to return to France but I shall come back here for you as soon as you are free; or if you are willing we can be married before you go to Rawlins."

Eve put a trembling brown hand on Peter's knee. "Peter! Peter, dear! Do you think that I could permit that sacrifice? Go back to England and forget me. No, not forget; I know that you can't do that. But go back and find some woman whose name is as clear as your own. Marry her before you return to France. . . . I am sorry, Peter, that I let you love me."

"Let me! I am a free agent, Eve, and a man of many experiences."

"Nevertheless," returned Eve, wearily, "a woman can always keep a man from caring if she tries hard enough. I'm guilty on that count, too! Listen! They've begun the speeches for old Tom! Or is that a loud voice in the jury room?"

Peter did not reply and after listening for a moment to the declaiming voice, Eve began again.

"You see, I had not realized until this noon that there had to be full truth between you and me. I had thought that, after all, this was my secret, and that if the jury freed me, justice would have been done both to Angus Duncan and to me. Then, as you talked to me, I realized that the shadow of the lies I'd told you would come between us. I dared not risk it—although I feared that the knowledge that I'd killed a man might kill your love for me. . . . And yet—I suppose you've killed many men yourself, Peter," she concluded wistfully.

"Surely, Eve"—Peter turned indignant blue eyes upon her—"you don't consider that a logical query! I am a soldier fighting for my country. You are a private citizen carrying on a personal vendetta."

"I see!" whispered Eve, her eyes dimming with pain.

Peter rose to face her. "No, you don't see! You don't see that I'd rather you had shot two brutes like Angus Duncan than that you had stolen a single horse? You don't see that your insisting to me and to your mother and to Poindexter that you were not guilty was the kind of lying I can't forgive? Had you served a prison sentence, guiltless, I'd have been on my knees to you. Bah! What a fool I am to talk so to you! And cruel, too. I know that you are weary and exhausted, and that you have done a very, very brave thing today. Could you not lie down and rest if I went away?"

"Lie down and rest?" repeated Eve with her little, one-sided smile. "With the murmur from the jury room to my right and from the Plaza to my left? . . . Peter, your business in Antelope Basin is ended. Why not go up to Cheyenne with Tom Maine's funeral cortège? There will be too much excitement for you to brood as you will if you go alone."

"I'll go on one consideration: that you permit me to bring in the clergyman after the funeral and that he marry us. I have been carrying a license about with me ever since the trial began."

For the first time Eve's eyes misted over with tears. "Peter! Peter! But surely you see that now I know your feeling about the things I've done, I cannot marry you! Peter, I'm like a person with no outer skin. Little things sting me. I bleed easily."

"I am deeply sorry that I said what I did and I beg of you to forgive me, Eve."

"I have become one of your obligations, eh, Peter? Why, my dear, I have no more intention of permitting you to tie your life to mine than I have of going to a cell in Rawlins."

Peter turned on her furiously. His drawl was gone. "How can you still talk like a cowardly Devonsher after your courage this afternoon? How can you?" He drew himself up and hurled at her, defiantly, "You are afraid to marry me! Afraid that your pride will be hurt! And I tell you that you shall marry me and that at once!"

He flung himself from the cell. Eve, who all this time had been drooping on the couch, rose slowly to her full height and lifted her face and her arms toward the crimson square in the window while she groaned in exquisite agony.

"Ah, God! God! God!"

THE voices in the Plaza and in the jury room rasped on. Had the double droning ceased for a moment, the jurors at least might have heard the low sounds as of mortal pain which came from the cell.

"Ah, God! God! God!"

But there was neither listening nor response to Eve's cry. She twisted her hands together and pressed them against her mouth. When she turned away from the window and tossed her hands against the barred door, her thumb knuckles were bleeding, and her face was distorted by an inner torture that no tears could relieve.

"Peter, no! Let me end it!" she panted. "Mother will understand."

She turned back to her bed and drew a Colt from beneath the blankets. She hesitated for a moment, debating with herself whether to lie down or to lean against the wall,. now a dulling green orange, an unearthly color of exceeding beauty. Not that Eve noted this nor the quick limping step that rushed along the passageway and jerked open the cell door.

"Eve!" Peter's voice broke with horror, as he snatched the Colt from her unresisting fingers.

"But you had gone, Peter!" said Eve dully.

"I came back to apologize! To explain! To make you understand that I'm not the cur I seem. And I find you— Oh, Eve! Eve!"

Peter dropped the Colt into the pocket of his coat and drew her, still unresisting, to the cot. She sank upon it, still staring at him with eyes that saw but dimly. She had been gazing into infinity. To refocus on Peter, and on the old agony, seemed for the moment impossible. The man paced up and down the cell and looked at her—at the gorgeous head against the swimming afterglow; at the noble lines of brow and lips—and a storm of protest burst from him.

"You were meant for better things! Eve! I have loved you as I never have loved a human thing. You came into my life like living flame into polar cold. I was without faith in faithfulness and you gave me back my belief. I have been moved by your unhappiness as nothing before has moved me. How can you fail me so! How can you!"

Eve did not reply. Slowly the glory before her eyes was removed. After all it had been but the afterglow. And Peter's last two sentences reached her inner ear. She moistened her lips and murmured brokenly: "Not Rawlins! Not marriage like that!"

"Oh!" cried Peter. "I can't endure your look!" Suddenly he flung himself on his knees and buried his tired face in her lap.

"Not that! And God forbid Rawlins for your free spirit!"

Eve looked down upon him and slowly laid her hands on his head. There was silence in the cell. In the Plaza came a sudden cessation of the murmur of voices; then clearly through the radiant afterglow rose the extraordinary sweetness of Sid Brownell's tenor:

"The Oregon Trail! The Oregon Trail!
The Oregon Trail! The Oregon Trail!"

Eve's whole body stiffened in an agony of attention. Peter lifted his head, clasped both the cold, shaking brown hands in his and listened with parted lips. Over and over, the melancholy musical phrase, a phrase of unbearable enchantment. Over and over, until it seemed to Peter that he could endure no more. Then Henry Worth's voice rose in strident protest. Then a murmur of many voices. Then a woman's voice going on in eulogy of old Tom. Eve's body did not relax. Peter chafed her cold hands. The tensity in her face was awful to contemplate. He began to speak as evenly as he could under the great stress that clutched his heart.

"After all, Eve, it's only a song. Ah, but what a song! And what a voice! Magic! It's the very call that drew your grandfather and mine across the world. It's the call that every soul of British blood out there on the Plaza understands. Just three words and old Sid's voice, yet—Eve, I know a man who could interpret it all for you."

Eve was looking straight into his eyes now and Peter could feel her body relaxing. He dared not stop talking for a moment and he plunged headlong into what he could recall of the "Song of the English."

"We were dreamers, dreaming greatly in the man-stifled town:
We yearned beyond the sky-line where the strange roads go down.
Came the Whisper, came the Vision, came the Power with the Need,
Till the soul that is not man's soul was lent us to lead.
As the deer breaks, as the steer breaks from the herd when they graze.
In the faith of little children, we went on our ways.
Then the wood failed—then the food failed—then the last water dried—
In the faith of little children, we lay down and died.
On the sand drift—on the veldt side—in the fern scrub we lay,
That our sons might follow after by the bones along the way.
Follow after—we are waiting for the trails that we lost
For the sound of many footsteps, for the tread of a host,
Follow after—follow after—for the harvest is sown,
By the bones along the highway ye shall come to your own.

"That is what Sid and his song says, Eve, to all of us."

Peter's slow voice merged into the many voices in the Plaza and jury room. There was the sound without of automobiles moving decorously. Next a scraping of wood on metal: old Tom's coffin being slid into Henry Worth's little auto truck. Followed silence, while with exquisite softness once more Sid's voice rose in the magic chant. But he had sung scarcely a half-minute when Henry's voice, heavy with drink, rose in wild protest.

"Stop it! Cut it! I can't stand it. You dassent do it to me again, I tell you, Sid! You did it once. Stop that hellish singing. Somebody help me. Oh! Oh!"

A CHAOS of voices rose, broken by a raucous laugh or two. Automobiles popped and whirred. Henry's shouting, incoherent and broken, continued. Now he was running across the war gardens in the Plaza, his voice growing clearer; now it receded as he rounded the courthouse; now it increased to a mad bellow as he rushed through the courtroom into the passageway.

"Where's Eve! I've got to see Eve. Let go of me, Bear! I'm drunk. I've got to see Eve. Sid's done it to me again."

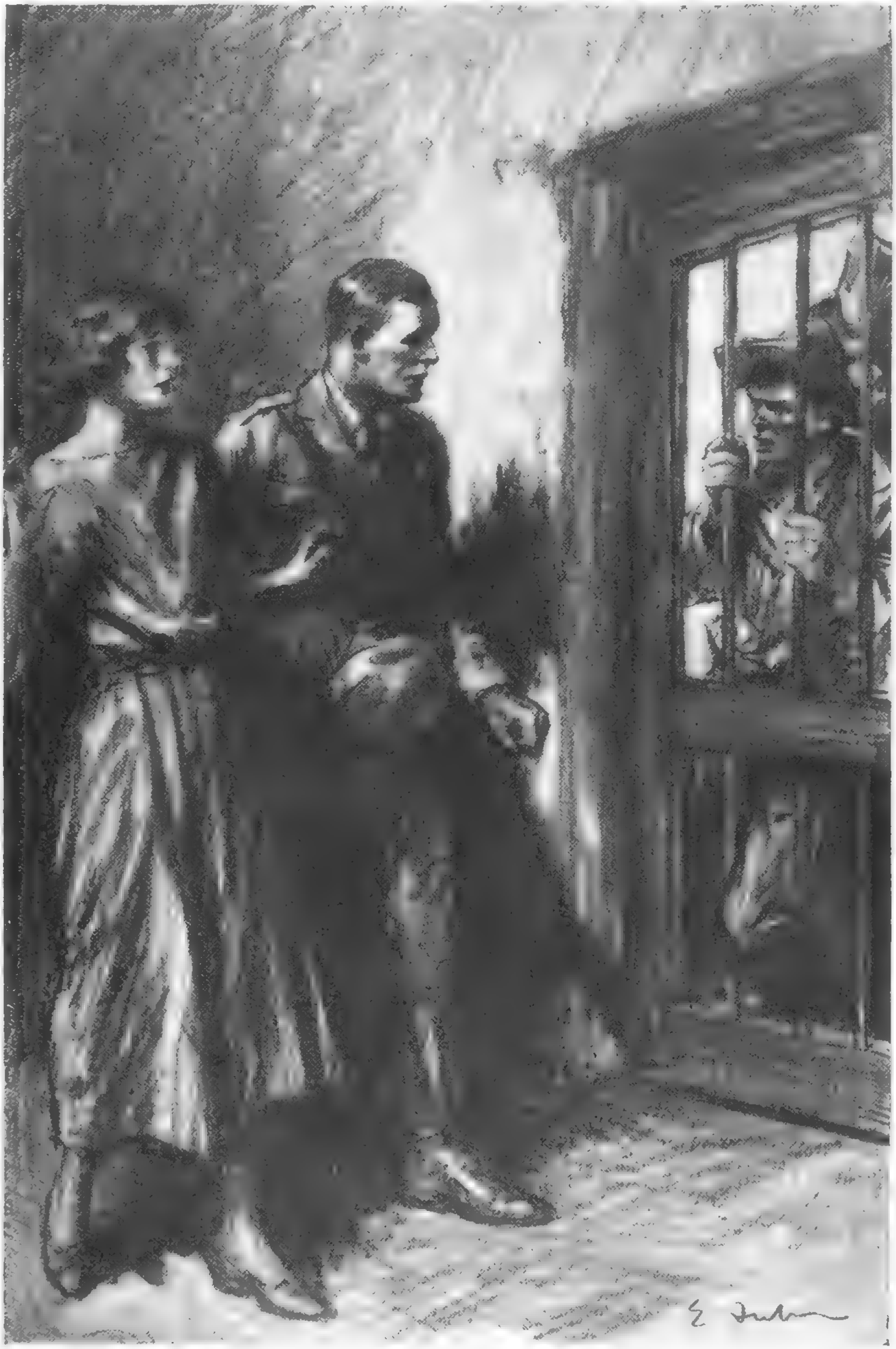
Eve and Peter were standing aghast as Henry's mad face appeared against the bars.

"Lemme in! I gotta speak to Eve. Get out, you British fool!"

A lamp suddenly was lighted in the passage. Judge Jones and Sid appeared and each grasped one of Henry's arms. He clung to the bars, face distorted, hiccuping drunkenly.

"I killed Angus Duncan. I shot his face off after he called me a Devonsher bastard. I put my .44 into his rotten grinning mouth and shot it to pieces. The pulp flew over my hands. I—"

He stopped suddenly and looked around inquiringly. "Whatcha wan', Willy Jone',



"I see you, you blasted Britisher! Well, you'll never have her. I fixed that when I let her be sent to Rawlins."

whatcha wan'? Raisin jack in hip pocket, Willy."

His hands dropped from the bars and he smiled foolishly. Sid and the judge made an effort at once to turn him away from the door. But as they did so, Henry's wandering eyes focused on Peter, standing with a hand on Eve's arm. The saloon keeper sprang back at the bars like a tiger lurching within his cage.

"I see you, you blasted Britisher! Well, you'll never have her. I fixed that when I let her be sent to Rawlins. I fixed you, Eve—huh?—when I told the world you had a bastard quarter-breed cousin. I'm quarter Sioux and I don't forget. You hear me, Eve?"

He pressed his terrible face against the bars in his effort to absorb her attention. Then with a cry that, had it not expressed utter despair, would have been the cry of a trapped coyote, he sank to his knees and wept. The sheriff and the judge lifted him to his wavering feet and half carried him back into the courtroom.

Eve turned to Peter, breathlessly. "Did you understand what he said? How could that be? He is very drunk, Peter! Go quickly and make them let him talk. Have them get Sid if need be."

She fairly thrust Peter from the cell, but she made no attempt to follow him, although the door was unlocked and the passageway probably was unguarded. The possibilities presented by Henry's drunken statement were so portentous that she was for the moment glad for the solitude of the cell while she adjusted herself to the thought of it.

From the courtroom came Henry's voice, now raised in rapid declaration, now broken in maudlin incoherence. She could not understand more than an occasional word. In a few moments she heard Jim Poindexter's big voice in excited interrogation. Then she heard some one out in the Plaza calling for Doc Peabody. After perhaps ten minutes in the courtroom, Peter came slowly back to the cell.

"Doc Peabody is going to make him sober; then Judge Jones will convene court and put Henry on the witness stand again."

Eve was standing exactly where he had left her. "How long will it take Doc Peabody?" she asked.

"He told the judge he could convene court at half after eight. It's now six o'clock."

The two stared at each other. Then Eve exclaimed: "Yet, if this frees me, you will hold against me the horses! You'd rather I'd be cleared of taking them than of shooting Angus. And yet"—lifting her chin in the old gesture—"I did take them."

"Yes," said Peter grimly. "I know that you did."

Eve gave him a strange glance. Then the significance of what was happening in the courtroom swept over her. "I didn't believe I had killed him," she cried, "until Judge Jones told me that he had been shot in the face. Then that awful gesture he had made, his arms across his face as he ran toward me—God, how it has haunted me in this cell. Peter! Go tell my mother!"

Peter turned away immediately and Eve for the first time was glad to have him go. The strange look on Peter's face was maddening in the midst of this colossal new turn of fate. She began to pace the cell, her mind more confused than it had been at any time during her trial. Fragmentary pictures of that terrible night at the old branding corral, of the flight with Bear Folsom's horses—no, her own horses—Peter's grim look a few moments before. Over and above all the promise of relief and release stood Peter's grim look.

JIM POINDEXTER interrupted her solitude. His white mane expressed even more excitement than his blazing eyes.

"Well, Eve! Well! Well! Well! Congratulations, girl!"

"You think it's not just drunken maunderings?" Eve clasped both his outstretched hands.

"Mighty circumstantial maunderings, by the Eternals! Lord, girl! God bless old Sid, I say. He put you in jail but, by Jove, he's getting you out, too. I wish you could see him. He's walking round and round Doc Peabody and Henry, threatening any minute to sing again, and Doc telling him to shut up and get out."

"How about the jury?" asked Eve.

"By the Eternals! Nobody's thought of the jury!" shouted Jim, and he dashed back into the courtroom.

This time Eve was left alone for a long hour. She lighted her lamp and paced the floor. She tried to read her Kipling, but could not concentrate upon it. Curious that Peter should have known her favorite passage by heart. Peter! Was life always to give to her with one hand while it withdrew with the other? To what avail Henry's confession if all was not to be clear between her and this man who had become more important to her than her life?

It was quiet now in the Plaza. Old Tom Maine had started on his last trail and Antelope Basin was at supper. Eve wondered if she was to be forgotten, now that the main rôle of her strange drama had been assumed by Henry. Not that she objected in the least to being forgotten, even if it meant going hungry. The door into the courtroom from the passage had been closed. Close on to eight o'clock Eve heard it open and Lee Fu shuffled to the cell with a steaming tray. He was all one broad grin.

"Maybe Missy last meal in jail, huh?"

"God send it so, Lee Fu. How is my mother?"

"She sleep. No sabez yet. Doc Peabody give pill make sleep. Be calful how tell. Maybe kill Miss Maly."

"Yes," agreed Eve, anxiously. "Lee Fu, promise me you'll guard her door and let no one in but Doc Peabody. Who's there now?"

"Major Colbaith. He say nobody but Doc Peabody gets in. You eat good supper now, Missy. Tloubles all over."

"We mustn't be too hopeful, Lee Fu. Maybe Henry Worth won't say anything when he's sober."

"They make sheliff sing again." Nothing could disturb Lee Fu's complacency.

Eve forced herself to eat, listening to Lee Fu's chatter with one ear while with the other she sought feverishly to interpret the dull sounds that rose from the courtroom. The Chinaman took the tray away. It lacked but ten minutes of the time for court to convene. It seemed to Eve that those ten minutes never would pass. She heard the crowd moving toward the courthouse. A quiet crowd, as if old Tom's funeral and the distress of this new claimant for the murder of Angus Duncan had depressed even the idle-minded and the curious. She heard the sound of scraping chairs in the courtroom, and the endless babble in the jury room ceased.

Then Sid Brownell appeared at the door. His face was haggard. His hair was wet with sweat. He was laboring under tremendous strain and showed it.

"We're ready for you, Eve," was all he had to say, however.

Eve followed him. The courtroom, lighted by several kerosene angle lamps, was packed as usual. The jury sat in strained attention. No one gave Eve more than a cursory glance. All eyes were concentrated on the corner of the room where Henry Worth sat beside Doc Peabody.

When court had been resumed Jim Poindexter rose. "Your Honor, testimony of prime importance for the defendant has been discovered. I wish to recall Henry Worth to the stand."

"Henry Worth to the stand!" said the sheriff sharply.

FOR a long breathless moment the owner of Henry's Place did not stir. Doc Peabody tapped him sharply on the shoulder. Henry rose slowly and walked very deliberately across to the witness chair. He looked very ill, yet his step was steady and his voice was firm as he took the oath. "The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth!" Eve wondered if God Himself could help the quarter-breed to achieve that!

"Henry," Jim Poindexter began without ceremony, "what was the date you had with Angus Duncan on the night of May twenty-fifth?"

"To make arrangements about a cache of beaver pelts he was negotiating to buy from me." Henry spoke as clearly as though he never had tasted raisin-jack.

"Beaver pelts! It's been 'closed season' in Wyoming on beaver for several years and will be for a considerable time longer. Where did you get the pelts, Henry?"

"Folks bring them to my saloon. These were last winter's catch. Winter was heavy and the pelts were very fine. I had accumulated about five thousand dollars' worth. Angus wanted to pay me three thousand."

"A risky business, isn't it, Henry, going against a Government regulation of that kind?"

"Yes, it is. But a lot of money in it. Angus took only a little of the risk but none of the hard work. He claimed because he'd actually get 'em to Salt Lake City and get the cash for 'em that we'd ought to split

25-75 in his favor. I said as long as I did the actual work of collecting 'em, the same split should be in my favor. That's what all the argument was based on."

"You wanted to complete the business arrangement on this night of May 25?"

"Yes. I brought up a wagon-load of the best pelts to go over with Angus and hide. We had a cache up near the old branding corral. We didn't dare to let Minnie know anything about it because she can't keep her mouth shut. So Angus was to say he was going to bait the horse thief. That's why I was so late, by arrangement. It wasn't the kind of a load to tote around Antelope Basin in broad daylight. I drove the wagon up the bed of Devonsher Creek so as to leave no tracks. It rises a couple of miles below the old corral."

There was a certain sullenness in Henry's voice and a certain defiance. Beyond that, Eve could see no sign of the man's mental perturbation, the perturbation that he had shown when all his control centers had been loosened by drink.

"I saw a little spark of fire up on the mountain and thought Angus was kind of careless. Although there wasn't a chance in a million that any one would be around the old corral that time of night. But just to be on the safe side, I left the wagon a mile down the mountain-side and went up to look things over on the saddle horse I'd been trailing. When I saw what was happening by the fire, I went on up to the corral. There wasn't anything in the shape of horses there and I wondered what excuse Angus had made to Minnie."

"You are sure there were no horses in the corral, Henry?" Jim Poindexter raised his eyebrows. "Come, let the jury have the whole story. The truth is the only means to soften their hearts to you, Henry. I know horse stealing is harder for a Wyoming jury to forgive than murder, but my advice to you, Henry, is to come clean."

The quarter-breed nodded as though he had struck a new bargain with the lawyer.

"Angus had a couple of horses hobbled up there. It occurred to me that I might be able to use them in connection with Major Colbaith. I knew that the horse thief would get the blame without a breath of suspicion on me. So I ran them a half-mile down to the west and swung back up to help with the Princess horse."

"Were you greatly surprised to see Miss Devonsher?" asked Jim.

"Yes and no. It hadn't occurred to me till I saw Eve there that she'd been running horses, but from that moment I suspected her. I could see she was in a terrible temper, though she was perfectly cool about it. I was awful sore about the colt, myself. But Angus always did have a heavy hand with horses—and with women," he added, thoughtfully. "Yes, I was sore about the colt but I was pleased to see Eve getting punished for some of the things she'd said to me when I tried to get her to marry me. I was never going to rest until I was even with her for that."

"WHAT did she say?" asked Judge Jones suddenly. "I am interested to learn what a woman could say to a man to make him willing to visit on her the kind of torture you have visited on Eve Devonsher."

Henry's eyes for the first time showed a malevolent light. "She said that I was a coyote in a sheepdog's skin. That she'd never trusted me since I'd lost or mislaid that stallion for her, years ago, on the wild-horse hunt with Sid and Angus and Minnie. When I told her that if what she called me was true, then she was cousin to a coyote, and proved it to her, she said she'd rather be married to a coyote than to me; that a coyote at least was not a mongrel. And when I told her I'd spread the news over the state she laughed at me and said I was silly as well as yellow. And all this, merely because I'd tried to get her to marry me. She acted as if the mere suggestion was an insult. Yet my grandmother was good enough to birth her an uncle!"

"That's about enough of that!" Judge Jones grunted. "Get on with your testimony."

Apparently in no wise embarrassed, Henry began again. "I followed Angus up to the branding corral after we'd done all we could or couldn't for the Princess horse. I wanted to head him off east rather than west for his horses. When I reached the corral he had dismounted to untie Rex.

" 'Look here, Henry,' he said, 'what kind of a fool do you think I am? Do you believe for a minute that I'm going to let you get away with the Princess horse?'

" 'You'd better had,' said I, 'or Eve will make Antelope Basin too hot to hold you.'

" 'I'm not afraid of the whole Devonsher family,' said Angus, 'with the Brownells and the Worths thrown in. No, nor with a whole tribe of limping Jesuses like Major Colbaith. I've got that fellow's number.'

"I said, 'He hasn't got any number but number two, that he's earned by taking on Howard Freeman's job.' I knew that would get an awful rise out of Angus and it did. I hadn't sat in my place night after night for years letting Angus tell me just how much he loved Eve, without having some idea how he felt toward Freeman and toward the Englishman. I felt the same way myself.

" 'Oh, he's just number two, is he?' yelps Angus. 'Then is that why he's coming round to me trying to buy the evidence I have in regard to Carter Devonsher's purchase of Antelope Basin? He's offered me five thousand so far. But he'll offer a whole lot more and he'll pay that and he'll give up Eve before he gets them.' Then he saw Eve riding up through the early light and he shifted right off and lowered his voice. 'Henry, you just put the Princess horse back in my corral and I'll make it worth your while.'

" 'But what good would that do?' I asked. 'Eve would just be after you like a wolverene. You'd better give up that horse, Angus. Looks like you'd got plenty of other good irons in the fire.'

" 'Yes, but they don't belong to Eve,' he said. 'Now, I'm warning you, Henry! You and I have put over many a pretty thing together but here's a point where friendship ceases. If you send that horse up to Major Colbaith, I'll get you some way as sure as I'm a living man.'

"I was doing some pretty rapid thinking. If what Major Colbaith wanted was some information about the Devonshers, it looked to me as if I was in a position to do a little bargaining with him myself. And as an entering wedge, there was the mare! It couldn't be better. I almost laughed in Angus's face.

" 'You must think, because I'm poor, I'm a fool, too!' I said. 'That mare goes to the major as soon as she can travel.'

"It was just at this minute that the Princess horse lumbers across the corral and nuzzles at his arm. Horses are fools! A mule would never have thought of Angus as an animal's friend. A mule forgets more in a minute than a horse knows in a year. Anyhow, Angus hauled off and kicked the mare and she groaned and Eve took a pot shot at Angus that singed his cheek. He cursed and threw up his arms and started toward her. She just turned Shawnee, took the east fence like a bird and was gone before Angus had taken ten strides.

" 'Let her go, you fool!' I said. 'If you're so fond of her you oughtn't to interfere with her business. Don't you realize she might be the one that's night-running horses?'

"HE STOPPED dead in his tracks and turned back to me. 'Her father's old stunt!' he sort of gasped. 'Devonsher-Arabians—she couldn't get reasonable for the major—that blank-blank bloody Britisher! Henry, I'll bet it's her!'

"I nodded. 'Leave your horses go for a little while, Angus, and follow her trail.'

" 'Yes, and in the meantime you get away with the Princess horse.' He gave me a long hard look and finally he said: 'Eve never took those horses of mine, though she probably got the others, because she was with the mare when they were run off. It's a good deal more likely that you took 'em. By God, I know you did! Tell me where you put 'em and what you took 'em for. You've turned Indian, you blank Sioux, you! You bastard Devonsher!' That's what he called me: 'bastard Devonsher!'

"He pulled the Colt from his hip, looking up at me with a crooked grin. I knew in a moment that Angus would get me lynched if he could for a common horse thief. And I stuck my .44 into his grinning mouth and shot his face off. He dropped stiff like a cottonwood post."

Henry shifted his knees and the familiar tinkle of his silver spurs sounded across the courtroom. Minnie Duncan began to scream. Her father clapped his great hand over her mouth and kept it there for some moments after Henry had begun to speak again.

The unexpected and highly dramatic conclusion of "The Devonshers" will appear in October EVERYBODY'S—out September 15.

A Daughter *of the* Stars

Another Appealing Picture of Horse and Man in Partnership, by the Author of "The Fourth Big Brother"

By Sam Carson

THERE was quite a commotion down at Stable S on Churchill Downs one sultry June afternoon. First a darky howled in pain, then came the crash of splintering wood, followed by a thunder of whirling, pounding hoofs within the stable ring.

Peter Horne forgot his talk of swapping platers with Bill Holder. Like a dozen other horsemen in the vicinity, he trotted over to Stable S. Holder was in the lead, and for a perfectly good reason; his horses were in that particular building.

"What in the world's going on, Mose?" he called as a negro emerged, face turned to the rear.

Mose glanced at his employer, eyes still wide. " 'At filly's plumb raising the devil, Mr. Bill," he answered. "Kicked Potato Joe out to the hallway. Half kilt him."

Holder advanced more cautiously. Motioning for Peter to follow, he came up to the entrance. Inside the source of all the trouble was yet in action. Halter rope swinging wildly, Shenandoah, Holder's temperamental two-year-old filly, was charging up and down the runway, pausing at times to wheel and display her ability to kick at stablemen who approached too closely. Shenandoah was having too good a time to submit to capture just then. All but treading upon the crawling form of Potato Joe, the filly would leap his body as if to demonstrate that it could be done. This and frequent returns to the stall of eight-year-old Moki, where she would nip at the old thoroughbred's flanks, made things lively for Stable S.

Bill Holder, who was ponderous and slow to action, was fully aroused by now. "Head her into an empty stall," he ordered. "The blamed fool will have 'em so excited it won't be any use feeding a thing in the stable. That's right—cut her off. Oh, Lord!"

As if the filly understood Holder's directions, Shenandoah broke through the little circle of figures and plunged toward the doorway. One tremendous leap and the two-year-old reached the street, paused to consider a passing truck, then headed toward the commons below the stable area.

For several moments Holder stared at the diminishing figure of his incorrigible thoroughbred. Down the line a half-dozen men attempted to catch the filly; but it was a half-hearted effort. Shenandoah wasn't traveling at a gait adapted for capture.

"Saddle up the pony, boys," Holder called out. "Reckon she'll tire out in a half-hour. Potato Joe hurt bad?"

"I'm plumb ruined," the darky answered. " 'At fool jus' naturally kicked my pants off'n me."

Peter Horne, who was tall and deliberate of movement, chuckled at sight of the filly's spirited maneuvers out on the commons. He stroked his gray mustache thoughtfully; Shenandoah certainly was the liveliest thoroughbred Bill Holder had. Also she was the most erratic, prone to misbehave at the barrier and more than likely to balk, or do something equally damaging.

"Bill," Peter inquired, "wouldn't take much to get up a trade for that filly, would it?"

"Might sell her," Holder answered, jaw set, "but not until I break the little fool. Ain't no hawss going to get the best of Bill Holder. Don't know where she gets that mean streak," he complained. "Lady McClung, her mammy, was about the best behaved mare I ever seen. And Tapestry—reckon he's the standard, the pattern we all go by."

" 'The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.' It's written in St. Luke," Peter observed. "Bill, that hawss is possessed of seven devils. Ain't a mean streak at all. She's too high-bred."

Holder wiped his moist face, sighed. "It'll take more than the Scriptures to convince me," he replied. "Steps five furlongs in fifty-nine flat—weight up. And then lopes around last in a race where the time's one minute. Seven devils! She's got forty-nine behind them purty brown eyes. I'll make a believer out of that filly if I have to bust every bone in her body, so help me."

"WHEN you own up to letting that filly get the best of you," Peter told him, "I'm ready to talk trading. You ain't improved her one speck. Seen her out to Major Talbot's farm, when she was a yearling. Used to beat Gobelin in from the meadow ever' time major showed up at the gate with apples."

"She won't beat Gobelin now—for apples or any other sort of stakes." Holder regarded a diminishing tobacco plug meditatively. "Gobelin's the best colt Tapestry'll ever brag about. Good-natured. Sam Goodwin seen the colt up to Pimlico in the spring. Said he's a Derby hawss."

Thirty minutes later Shenandoah, lathered and rather wearied from the chase, was led back to the stable. It hadn't been an easy task for the stable force; perspiring faces attested to that fact. The filly appeared docile enough, but that was an attitude. Coming to the stable entrance, she reached forward for an experimental nip at the pony's flanks. It worked. In the confusion that resulted from a thrown stable boy, Shenandoah trotted quietly to her stall and began to whinny for her supper.

Holder inspected his filly carefully; in fact, summary inspections were all too frequent of late. This was Shenandoah's second outbreak within three days. The preceding week she had leaped the fence while at the barrier in a stake race. The filly had been pointed with care for that contest. Speed—the thoroughbred had it to spare. Moreover, the daughter of Tapestry had gameness. But these assets were of small value against a spirit of mischief which refused to be curbed. Strangely enough, Shenandoah was the stable pet. Even as Holder surveyed his filly Potato Joe limped up to the box stall with the feed bucket, eyes alert, but mouth twisted into a sheepish grin. A kick from any other animal in the Holder string and the old darky would have played sick; but Potato Joe talked to Shenandoah in honeyed tones, poured out the feed and mixed it with his hand. Then he stroked the filly's head, scolding her gently for her misdeeds.

"Funny hawss!" Holder observed. "Standing there eating, she looks like a million dollars. Wish I could get some sense in her head."

"Mist' Bill," Potato Joe spoke up, " 'at filly's got sense. Ain't none of us un'erstan' her—tha's all."

"I dunno," Holder objected, "unless it's a sense of pure contrariness, and she'd got that; I can't hand her much else. Somebody'd better not come along and offer me real money. I'd let the hawss go."

Shenandoah turned her head and gave her owner a look which startled him; Holder never had approached the filly's stall without trepidation. Shenandoah's ears flicked rearward too willingly. "That she-devil knows I'm talking about her," he announced. "I'd give a whole lot to know just what she intends to do next Saturday. I know what she ought to do; she ought to run that five-furlong race two lengths in the lead—toting only a hun'red and six pounds."

Now it is a matter of record that Shenandoah equaled the track record in the race that had worried Holder. Swift as a greyhound, the daughter of Tapestry flashed to the front and led every jump of the way. And in so doing, Shenandoah merely postponed her ultimate fate. It was the last race she won under the Holder colors. Thereafter followed a series of balks, thrown jockeys and sulky periods at the barrier. It was too much for Bill Holder; he had become the butt of countless jokes over his prize lemon. So, one afternoon after the stewards had advised him that Shenandoah must go to barrier school of mornings, and face banishment from the track unless

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speedy improvement was noted, Holder met Peter Horne near the stables.

"Mean that the other day," he demanded, "about wanting a trade for the filly?"

Peter tugged at his mustache. "I reckon," he said, "that I ain't never made idle talk. I'll trade."

Thus it was that Harpoon, a dependable plater, was transferred to Holder's string, while a group of derisive horsemen watched Peter Horne lead Shenandoah over to his own stable. No one mourned the filly's departure openly—except Potato Joe. And he called on Holder for his time. Potato Joe never thought to explain his reason; but the next morning he showed up at Peter Horne's place, ready for work.

IN A tiny room in the front part of the stable building, Peter Horne sat beneath an electric bulb and pored over a well-worn book. That cloth book, with ragged binding, was ever in the owner's coat pocket. Frequently, as he read, Peter would mumble out parts of the text; it was the Gospel according to St. Luke which appealed the most.

"John," he reflected, "talked straight from the shoulder. This part where the publicans came to be baptized, and asked what to do: 'And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you.' That," he observed thoughtfully, "is all you can ask of the golden rule. Wonder how I can ever get that across to the filly—and practice it myself."

Replacing the tattered book in his pocket Peter strolled back to Shenandoah's stall. The filly was alert, although other thoroughbreds were dozing. Turning her head, she regarded her new owner curiously. There were many points about the filly to command attention. Rather long-limbed, with smooth satin hair and eyes set extremely wide apart, Shenandoah looked every inch a thoroughbred. For some reason, there wasn't any mischief in her brown eyes; and that docile appearance heightened the filly's resemblance to Lady McClung.

"The war's over, my young lady," Peter said. "Bill Holder's turned you loose for keeps. Trying to beat sense into your dainty head, he was. He had the wrong idea." Peter placed a hand on the stall partition. "Steady there! I'm not going in. Just dropped around to say howdy and let you know Whistling Bill's picked to ride you. Ain't no young feller, Bill ain't, but he's a fine scout. Twenty-six years old and big-hearted as they make 'em. You'll get along fine. Go to sleep now. Your old boss is getting tuckered out."

So Peter Horne's education of Shenandoah began. In prime condition, full of run and possessed of a hearty appetite, the filly presented no problem except in the matter of temperament, which, translated, meant post behavior. Whistling Bill Kent, a jockey of few rides from preference, was fast approaching a period when he should give all his time to the profession of training. There were few who understood lean-visaged, close-mouthed Whistling Bill. Peter Horne did; that was why Kent rode for the veteran owner. Like Peter, Whistling Bill saw possibilities in the racing of Shenandoah.

The pair held a consultation one morning after the rider had taken the filly out for a short workout. Whistling Bill, after turning his mount over to Potato Joe, begged a chew from Peter and watched the filly heading for the stable.

"She can run a mile in one thirty-seven, easy," he announced. "Had to hold her in for the six furlongs."

Peter nodded. "Misbehave any?"

"Not a bit. Kind of rubbed her nose over my vest before I got in the saddle. Seems friendly."

"We'll have to go slow," Peter decided. "Nobody but Potato Joe to feed her, and you to do the exercising. Believe we'll make it well enough for the Hoffman Stakes on getaway day."

"Maybe," Whistling Bill grunted.

It looked as if Peter Horne would see his hopes triumph. Shenandoah was on her best behavior; for a week the filly had been as friendly as a pup, whinnying eagerly when Potato Joe or any of the others paid her a visit. There were no disturbances. Shenandoah took to training in as matter-of-fact a way as any other animal in the stable. At barrier school it was the same. Lined up of mornings, with all the mock tumult of a real start, Shenandoah would sidle up to the webbing, straighten out and wait for the break. Not once had the filly balked. Small wonder, then, that Whistling Bill announced that Shenandoah was ready for the Hoffman Stakes.

A getaway day card at any track witnesses some sharp rivalry. It is a time when owners need transportation money. True, the jump to Latonia, goal of practically all racing at Churchill Downs, was but little more than a hundred miles; yet there was a sizable list of entries in the Hoffman, enough to make Peter Horne realize that Shenandoah had all the competition wanted.

The end came swiftly enough. Watching the line of thoroughbreds at the post until his eyes ached, Peter Horne saw the webbing shoot upward, saw one light brown figure standing rigidly at the point where a dozen horses had waited a second before. In short, Shenandoah was left at the post, sulking, as incorrigible as ever.

Whistling Bill, slow to lose his temper, brought down his whip. For that, the filly threw him, then galloped easily after the speeding field.

Peter groaned. He saw stablemen leaping the fence and heading his entry off. Down the track Whistling Bill was trotting along. Behind Peter the stands were breaking into tumult, exulting in the sight of eleven two-year-olds battling gamely into the stretch. But the contest held no interest for the owner. Groaning, he waited until the field thundered by, then crossed to the infield.

"No good," Whistling Bill grunted, staring glumly at Shenandoah.

The filly, now in charge of Potato Joe, stood, head erect, at the stable entrance to the track. Suddenly she pulled back, and it required all the darky's efforts to prevent a runaway.

PETER strode forward. "Give the halter to me," he ordered abruptly.

For once in his life Peter Horne was mad. Shenandoah, through sheer spitefulness, had wrecked his well-laid plans.

"She jus' didn't un'erstan'," Potato Joe whined. "That's all, Mist' Peter."

Peter Horne did not reply. Holding the rope with a firm grip, he headed for the stable. The darky hesitated; he wanted to follow, but something was wrong; he felt it. Better to remain away for a time.

Once Shenandoah reared, forefeet pawing. Peter did not glance back. He merely stood and waited until the filly settled, then tugged at the halter.

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At the entrance there was another balk, another wait, and then the pair went inside.

Not until he had reached the box stall did Peter Horne halt. Shenandoah stiffened, eyes rolled back, ears drawn.

"You she-devil!" Peter said grimly. "I thought you were a second Lady McClung. Now I believe Bill Holder was right. I—"

Without warning the filly lunged forward, teeth grazing Peter's wrist. Tiny flecks of scarlet appeared, grew.

Peter stepped back. Perhaps more than a foot of the heavy rope was doubled in his right hand. At the farther end was a double knot. Beside himself, the owner swung the rope at the filly's head in the manner of a club. The knot struck Shenandoah—over the left eye.

It was the low-pitched, gripping moan that effaced anger and drained Peter's face of color, the fearful inarticulate cry of pain of a thoroughbred. Yes, of any horse. Once heard, it is never forgotten.

Peter stood, wrist dripping, numbed by realization of his act. The halter rope dropped to the ground, forgotten. There was no need for it now. Shenandoah trembled, her head drooping, a pain-racked sight.

"Lord!" her owner's lips moved dryly. "Lord!"

From behind came the wail of a tortured soul. "Mist' Peter—what you gone an' done? You gone an' blinded my baby."

Potato Joe hobbled up, groping his way toward the dazed thoroughbred. Sobbing, he touched the filly's neck, rubbed his gnarled hands along the satin hair. "Honey—jus' yore ol' darky, tha's all."

"Shut the door," Peter commanded in a strange voice. "And hurry back—hurry!"

Potato Joe obeyed mechanically. When he returned Peter Horne was on his knees, a time-worn, tattered book in his hands. Moreover, he was at the feet of Shenandoah.

"Joe," Peter announced, "the sin I have committed is out of my hands. I am not a good servant. Listen!

> "But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken;
>
> "The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.

"That's me, Joe. It is written in St. Luke—written for all to see. And I didn't. Look at the filly—my servant—whipped with my right arm."

Whereupon Peter lifted his eyes upward and begged forgiveness. There was no one to steal in upon this strange tableau, Peter and Potato Joe and one forlorn race horse.

Not until darkness did owner and stableman quit the box stall, and that after other employees had arrived and finished the business of feeding. Two veterinarians had examined Shenandoah, and neither held out the hope that sight could be restored to the left eye. The right would not be affected, they told Peter; but a long absence from the track was necessary. It was Potato Joe who explained glibly how the filly, fighting the halter, had bumped quite accidentally into a bridle peg just outside the stall.

PETER let that explanation stand; his Presbyterian conscience bore enough burden without the condemnation of fellow horsemen. He must expiate a deep wrong; and Peter was concerned over the manner of his atonement. Long into the night he sat beside his cot and pondered the subject. Frequently he would close the book which was his constant companion, and tiptoe back to Shenandoah's stall, always to find Potato Joe awake.

"Joe," he announced on his last trip, "I reckon my plan's settled. I'm going to sell out—all but her. Got a forty-acre place down in Christian County. Ain't much. Some of it ain't cleared—full of sassafras—and briers. Going to take the filly down there—and stay until she can hit the track again. Don't want to win but one race—the one she's entitled to win—like her mammy. That's the Oaks. Reckon you'd better find another job. Guess I'll sell out the coming week."

Potato Joe kept his hand on Shenandoah's mane, eyes half closed. The old darky was tired. "Mist' Peter, cain't I go with you? I can cook," he explained with a show of pride, "an' sleep in the barn. Don't take much for this old darky."

"I figured," Peter reflected, "that you'd come along. Maybe that was the way things were intended. No use of staying up. We'd better get some sleep."

THUS began the strange penance of Peter Horne, self-condemned for his single act of sinning in all his sixty years. The owner's stock was disposed of quickly; although platers, Peter's string had been kept in splendid condition. To Whistling Bill alone was the secret of Peter's destination divulged. That was because the jockey understood. Whistling Bill promised to visit the Christian County farm the coming spring; moreover, he pledged himself to ride Shenandoah in the Oaks.

Thereafter Peter Horne and Potato Joe became exiles, either as lonely as any Napoleon on his Elba. For Shenandoah, to judge by the filly's actions, it was a delight. She had nothing to do; was petted beyond reason by two old men who strove to gratify her every whim except the filly's constitutional aversion to grooming. She was given freedom of a grass-covered lot in which to exercise at her own sweet will, and plenty of food. She had no arbitrary workouts; just peaceful days in which the pain gradually died away in her eye. True, Shenandoah began to move about with her head slightly averted; for the left eye had become sightless. But there was no alteration of poise, no change in stride as the filly would race about the pasture lot at times.

Shenandoah had gained something many humans have sighed for—complete freedom of will; that is, if you discount certain petty restrictions which the filly very probably overlooked. And as winter came on, bringing its chill blasts from the north, the thoroughbred's satin hair became thicker, fuzzier; the animal's appetite attained alarming proportions, so much so that Peter bought a mule and cart. This outfit he sent out on a foraging expedition. Peter's farm had been tenantless for two years, hence its impoverished condition. The pasture lot, pelted by rain and freezes, became a swamp, whereupon Shenandoah was forced to remain in the barn.

Herein was Peter Horne's wisdom revealed. Shenandoah began to yearn for companionship; the filly grew lonely. Then it was that Peter would go to the barn and spend long periods near his thoroughbred. Seldom would he speak. More often he would lean against the crib and mumble passages from the book which he never laid away. Ostensibly disregarding the filly, Peter was growing very anxious, awaiting the time when Shenandoah should make the first overture of friendship.

It happened late one rainy afternoon. Without preliminaries, Shenandoah whinnied softly, stretched forth her nose and rubbed Peter's coat sleeve. There was no air of hesitancy, no drawing back of ears. Peter's heart raced; he gulped. Then he came to his feet, extended a hand and began to stroke Shenandoah's neck.

"Oh, Joe!" he called. "Come a-running!"

The old darky shuffled down the hayloft steps. The sight of Shenandoah's head on Peter's shoulder made Potato Joe halt. "Hones' to goodness, Mist' Peter! She do that herself?"

Peter nodded gravely. "She didn't dodge me, Joe. Came right up to be petted."

Potato Joe scratched his grizzled hair. "Looks lak we kin staht trainin' her when the weather clears. Pore lil honey gal! You knows yore folks loves you. Yassir, Mist' Peter—'at hawss craves to tell you she ain't goin' to give no more trouble."

" 'For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest,' " Peter quoted. "I was reading that a minute ago. I've paid the first part of my penance. We'll move up to Churchill Downs the first of March. I'll write Whistling Bill tonight."

Spring sent its heralds ahead, then gave way to the rearguard defense of winter. Peter Horne had been exercising Shenandoah on a makeshift ring alongside the stable. He extended the workout period day by day, and the filly was taking thirty-minute canters as March neared. Potato Joe had been sent to a country store one afternoon when a sudden rain flurry swept out of the north. Peter was drenched before he had the thoroughbred back in the barn. Getting wet never had worried the owner.

But this time Peter had disquieting signals; his chest became sore; and that night he had a fever. Potato Joe wanted to go for a doctor the next morning, but Peter objected. It was a bad cold, he insisted. "I'll be over it in a day or so," he said.

However, by dusk, Peter was delirious. Potato Joe, coming in from feeding, found his employer across the bed. "Mist' Peter!" the darky called.

There was no response; but the white man's labored breathing told the thing even Potato Joe recognized. "Lawd!" he groaned. "Hit's pneumonia."

Trotting out to the barn, the darky delved into a gunny-sack and produced his sole remedy, a small portion of red whisky. This he forced into Peter's mouth after the manner of drenching a horse.

WHAT to do next worried Potato Joe. He realized a doctor was needed; but where was one? It was six miles to the railway junction; probably a practitioner dwelt there. But six miles over rough roads, driving the obstinate little mule Peter had bought, was a trip that meant considerable delay. Potato Joe put the patient under cover, his problem still unsolved. For once the darky craved to live in a more thickly populated community.

After a time Peter stared up at Potato Joe, understanding in his eyes. "Don' you worry none," the darky advised. "You're going to git well, Mist' Peter. Potato Joe's aimin' to hunt up a doctor tonight."

Peter's lips moved. "Tel-ephone," he whispered, "up—the road—" He closed his eyes again.

Five minutes later it occurred to Potato Joe that a party telephone line included a farmhouse three miles away. Peter had mentioned it once—at a Mr. Hitson's. They had bought oats there several times.

Outside a swirling rain bore down again. Potato Joe realized the road would be a regular bog. "Cain't hitch up that cart tonight," he reflected. "We'd never git anywhere. Mist' Peter's maybe going to die. We jus' got to git to 'at telephone."

Peter moved restlessly, groaned. Potato Joe, gazing at the owner in the yellow light from an oil lamp, saw that Peter's lips were blue. It was then that inspiration came. The darky was frightened at the sheer audacity of it. "Ride Shenandoah! Nigger—whut you thinkin' about? You'd plumb ruin her.

"Maybe," he added, "you'd ruin her. But—Mist' Peter's maybe dyin'. 'At mule cain't take a saddle. Throw ol' Potato Joe in a minute."

Once he made his decision, there was no hesitation. Potato Joe went out into the night and rain, groping his way toward the barn. Somehow he found the battered lantern near Shenandoah's stall, fumbled until he obtained a dry match. The filly looked curiously at the unusual visitor. "Honey gal," Potato Joe announced, teeth chattering, "we jus' got to do it. Got to find a telephone—an' find it fast."

It was with some trepidation the darky climbed into the tiny saddle. But he was unafraid. Fully two score of years had passed since Potato Joe had been astride a thoroughbred; and then he had worn a silken blouse. The darky hooked the lantern bail under his left arm, made certain that the gate was still open, then spoke to the filly. "Most funny barrier you ever faced," he observed. "Honey gal, Mist' Peter's halfway dead. We got to win this race. Le's go!"

And go they did, into a mucky, rain-lashed night, through a sea of interminable mud, Potato Joe's body racked by unaccustomed jolting.

"HONEY," Potato Joe grunted, "you is a mud-runnin' fool. Please don't—ump—hurt yoreself. Oh, Lawdy! This ol' nigger ain't goin' to stan' this long."

Plunging whole-heartedly into the mud, Shenandoah tore into the wind-whipped darkness. She was running easily, careening at times as the old darky swayed in the saddle. Wisely enough, Potato Joe allowed the filly the rein. Small reason to attempt guidance on such a night. Besides, the darky realized that it was best to let his mount have her own way. Horsemen know that in an emergency it is better to drop the lines. It is a sorry horse which is without the sixth sense of orientation.

"We gone maybe a whole mile," Potato Joe announced, right hand rubbing Shenandoah's mud-covered body. "Don't run so fas'. But, honey, Mist' Peter's awful sick."

Some twenty minutes later John Hitson was aroused from his dream of a bumper tobacco crop by the sound of a faint halloo. Upon its repetition he lighted a lantern, opened the door and wanted to know who in thunderation was up at such an hour on such a wild night.

"It's me," Potato Joe explained weakly, "—me an' a winded race hawss. I'm Mist' Peter Horne's nigger. He's a-dyin'."

With that the darky slid to the sea of mud threatening to engulf his precious filly's legs.

PETER HORNE recovered—recovered without knowledge of Potato Joe's expensive ride. It was a hard pull, despite the care which the practitioner summoned by Hitson's telephone, gave. So, instead of March, it was nearing April before the owner could think of quitting his tiny farm. In a vague way Potato Joe had explained that he was getting Shenandoah into shape; he had been riding her, he said, out in the pasture lot as it dried under a warming, spring sun. Peter was thankful that the darky had done even that much. But he knew that his thoroughbred was far beyond training necessary to be launched into the spring meeting at Churchill Downs.

One day Peter essayed a visit to the barn. As he came outside, moving slowly, Hitson drove up in a noisy flivver. Hitson was the gaunt, earnest type of mankind who feels a deep sense of responsibility. Peter invited his visitor in. Together they went to the pasture fence where Potato Joe was trotting Shenandoah about the improvised track.

"Looks mighty peaked, to've had such a good rest," Peter observed, somewhat puzzled.

"Looks good to me," Hitson replied, "considering she was all stove up from that ride."

"What ride?" Peter demanded.

And then Hitson told him. "Your darky asked me not to tell you," Hitson added. "So I waited until you got well. Reckon you set a lot by that race hawss. Don't know much about 'em myself. But she'd make a fine saddler—if you want to sell her. Hawsses like her can single-foot easy."

Peter didn't seem to hear at all. He was too amazed. And then he became terrified. What if Shenandoah were ruined? So that was why the wily old darky had been so evasive recently. Shenandoah risked for the sake of getting a doctor! Peter was convalescing now, so his illness did not appear so serious. Trembling, he opened the pasture gate.

"Joe!" he quavered.

Peter's summons wasn't very loud, but Potato Joe realized that his employer knew. Dismounting, he led Shenandoah forward.

"Mos' ready to run, Mist' Peter," the darky announced. "She's all right. Yassir."

"Joe," Peter begged, "don't lie. Did you hurt the filly—that night?"

For a time the darky remained silent, eyes on the thoroughbred. "Kind of pulled a tendon—in her right foreleg," he muttered; "but it's straightened out. Wasn't winded much. Mist' Peter," he said, "one thing I don't know. Maybe she didn't run her heart out that night—an' maybe she did. She's mighty quiet-like lately."

Shenandoah whinnied, approached timidly and nuzzled Peter's coat sleeve. The uninjured eye was as bright as ever. Peter felt a lump grow in his throat.

"Hitson," he said, "I might will you the farm—or I might trade it—cheap. But—reckon one of the things that just naturally couldn't happen would be to sell the filly. Joe, figure we'll have to wait until she hits the track before we find out how she's stood the test. And I'm going to invest in blinkers for her. Won't look so bad."

So back out of exile came Peter Horne, Shenandoah and her voluntary slave, Potato Joe. Furthermore, Peter Horne burned his bridges. He sold the farm to Hitson, chiefly because he needed the money. Campaigning with one race horse of doubtful value meant little chance of ending the continued drain on Peter's finances. And the sum realized from selling his platers the preceding year could not last through the season.

Potato Joe found a dusky stable boy to exercise Shenandoah—a scrawny mulatto who weighed one hundred pounds and knew his business. The filly's reappearance at Churchill Downs attracted some attention. Peter's peculiar disappearance had caused even more. Shenandoah's anemic condition surprised horsemen as much as the thoroughbred's subdued spirit. It wasn't that the filly was really in bad shape; but three-year-olds generally fill out during winter months and require several fairly strenuous weeks to eliminate superfluous flesh. So, by comparison, Shenandoah appeared poor indeed.

WHISTLING BILL, back from New Orleans, was curious; and to him Peter related full details. "She was mighty near a breakdown," the owner explained. "Ain't turning her loose yet, just short gallops in the morning. Bill, would you take her out—say next Monday morning—and see if she's got any steam in her joints?"

Whistling Bill would. And he did one dew-freshened morning, just after dawn. Out on the track with the crisp spring breeze in his face, Whistling Bill cantered Shenandoah for a quarter-mile, then clucked to her.

They shot down the stretch, past railbirds clustered near the stable gate, into the upper turn and on to the curving reaches above the home stretch. One-half mile in racing time and then Whistling Bill began to pull at the lines. As he did he noticed the filly's labored breathing. Thereafter he slowed to a canter.

"She's got steam," Whistling Bill told an anxious owner some minutes later, "—steam a plenty; but it don't last. Beginning to lather, too. Needs toughening up."

A dark brown shape, near the chute, sprang to life, tore up the back stretch and swept by, hoofs striking in a sort of rhythmic beat—kit-er-ick—kit-er-ick—kit-er-ick! Clockers concentrated upon chronometers, glanced up as the thoroughbred passed quarter posts.

"Chickasaw May," Whistling Bill grunted. "Blew in from Maryland Saturday. Owner's on the ground early for the Oaks."

Peter didn't comment. He didn't have to; Chickasaw May had made her record as a two-year-old, for any one to see. But he stared long at the filly, now running steadily, down the home stretch.

"Come on, honey gal," Potato Joe spoke up. "Me an' you's goin' to git ready for this Chickasaw May hawss."

"You do," said a derisive voice, "and I'll buy Chickasaw May and give the filly to you-all."

Bill Holder's bulky form approached. He glanced at Shenandoah with a tolerant air. "Chickasaw May's good," he asserted. "What's the layout, Peter? Figuring on unloading your filly this meeting?"

"No," Peter answered. "Aim to run her a little."

Holder chuckled. "I'd put her in short races then. Heard a clocker swear your hawss couldn't step a foot more'n six furlongs. Wind's bad."

"I might," Peter admitted seriously, "change my mind, Bill. Reckon, as things stand, she goes in the Oaks. Kind of lost her bad temper since you sold her. Maybe yore own was sort of ketching."

Holder flushed. At heart he was worried about Shenandoah; it would hurt to have the filly turn out a winner. Holder was an egotist. "I'll bet she ain't no sweet angel—yet," he asserted, walking up to the filly.

First Shenandoah jerked her head back, then struck out at her former owner with both forefeet. Both Peter and Potato Joe were profoundly shocked. It was over in a moment, Shenandoah settling back on all four feet. But the light in her eye betrayed a memory that was not dead.

"Even men can backslide," Peter observed. "It's written in the Book."

"She'd better save them kicks for Chickasaw May—or Spring Call—yes, or Della H.," Holder said. "If it was me, I'd take her out in the country the day they run the Oaks. Save you entry fees, anyway."

Holder wasn't the only one who refused to take Shenandoah seriously; clockers who kept a fairly close tab upon the filly noted that the thoroughbred invariably would run the three-quarters of a mile in grand style, only to falter and slow up perceptibly the next furlong. The filly was classified as a sprinter, easily winded and never worked out with a heavy rider. About this time Derby eve arrived; and, for the time, fillies preparing for the Oaks, to be run two weeks later, were all but forgotten.

Peter Horne couldn't make his decision. Obviously enough, Chickasaw May and one or two other entries were demonstrating their fitness. Under weights very nearly as much as their handicaps in the Oaks, a half-dozen candidates were taking hard gallops for the full distance of the classic. Neither the negro stable boy nor Whistling Bill had urged Shenandoah after she had shown a habit of slowing up before traversing a mile. It was Peter's policy never to force one of his horses. So, two days before the running of the Oaks, he told Potato Joe he was considering withdrawing Shenandoah.

"Mist' Peter, don' do that," the darky protested. "You don' know that baby lak I do. She jus' don' want to run when there ain't no use. That's all."

Peter shook his head. "I tried to believe that a long time. But the filly's in condition now. Muscles are tough enough. Eats hearty. Reckon it's something deeper than that. But I don't know what—I don't, for a fact."

Potato Joe shuffled down to Shenandoah's stall, regarded the thoroughbred thoughtfully. "Ain't nothin' in the whole worl' lak hawss-sense, Mist' Peter," he explained. "I done tol' Whistling Bill somethin'. Now I'll tell you. Mist' Peter, let our filly run. Let Whistling Bill take her out in front right from the jump. She'll show you what she is. Mist' Peter, she'll stick out in front."

"The field would sweep by, before hitting the back stretch," Peter pointed out. "Stopping like she had on brakes."

"What if she got the lead," Potato Joe demanded, "an' kept it a half-mile? Wouldn't everybody hang back—waiting to go by in the home stretch?"

"Reckon they would," Peter admitted.

"Well—maybe Whistling Bill might manage to hold our filly up—save her wind. She'd fool 'em then, wouldn't she? Them boys ain't such smart judges of pace. An' Whistling Bill is."

Peter studied a long time. It was a forlorn chance. Let but one jockey realize what was going on—that would be enough. The field would pass Shenandoah in an instant. Running over the list of jockeys quickly, Peter couldn't recall one who was a better judge of pace than Whistling Bill. Veteran that he was, Eddie Simon, the leading rider at Churchill Downs, had been suspended for a week; that left none but Whistling Bill as a representative of the old school.

"I'll think it over—tonight," Peter told Potato Joe. "See Whistling Bill anywhere, send him over. Want to talk with him."

SIX three-year-olds paraded around the paddock inclosure—six survivors of some twenty-odd nominated for the Kentucky Oaks. Slowly they moved, hedged by a compact circle of humanity, a small portion of thousands in stands, clubhouse inclosure and out on the terraces. Chickasaw May, holding number one post position, walked with head erect, unconcerned by the noisy throngs.

"Can't see the number plate on that last one—brown horse," an onlooker observed. "Guess she's number seven."

"Shenandoah," his neighbor informed. "Hear she's one-eyed. Never did much as a two-year-old—"

"Except spoil a half-dozen races," a third party interrupted. "Can't tell about them kind of horses."

"If it's Shenandoah," the first person

spoke up, "I'm not worried. She'll about run seventh. It's Chickasaw May's race."

Peter Horne also was wondering just what Shenandoah was going to do. Standing alongside his entry, while Potato Joe massaged her forefeet anxiously, the owner couldn't keep from glancing at Chickasaw May each time she went by. Presently the filly was led into a stall, whereupon Peter breathed easier.

"Whistling Bill's about due," Potato Joe observed. "There goes the bugle."

Into the paddock came the jockeys, serious-faced. Onlookers ceased talking, some breaking away to run for vantage points wherefrom to view the coming race. Whistling Bill, least perturbed of the trio, entered the stall. "Told 'em I'm going to hustle the hawss into the lead and keep her there until she curls up," he told Peter. "Most of 'em sort of razzed me. Guess they'll give me a chance to rate her the first half."

Peter rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "Patience," he observed, "is what you're going to need, son. 'Tain't exactly right to humbug the boys. 'In your patience possess ye your own souls.' I need all the money I can lay my hands on. But if you put Shenandoah across, son, I'm going to split with you—and Potato Joe also. You've earned it. And it's part of my punishment. Hold her back the first three-quarters if you can. Then give her the whip. I don't know. She might balk, or try to throw you. We've got to find out, that's all. There's the bugle. Good luck."

Into the saddle went Whistling Bill, mouth grim. It might have been imagination, but Whistling Bill was sure he felt Shenandoah shiver; perhaps it was a warning that something was going to happen. Whistling Bill felt the least bit nervous.

But on parade the filly trotted along, on best behavior. There was no break from line, nothing untoward as they reached the clubhouse and turned back for the barrier. Glancing sidewise, Whistling Bill saw that the majority of faces lining the rail were turned toward Chickasaw May. He had already learned that the eastern thoroughbred was the favorite. That was why he had made such an effort to impress on Billy Littrell, Chickasaw May's rider, his plan to shoot Shenandoah out in front at the start.

"Sister," Whistling Bill begged, tossing away his tobacco cud, "we gotta use our brains now. Our price is five to one; and that's our chances, unless we work our bluff. Steady there! The outside's ours. Ease up to the webbing real nice. That's the time."

The start wasn't delayed very long. For once Starter Young had things very much to his liking. He surveyed the even alignment, cautioned riders to get set; then snapped the trigger.

Whistling Bill found no opposition when he set to work on Shenandoah. There was no using of whips, no hard-fought battle at the start. Evidently the five jockeys behind him were contented to let Shenandoah cut diagonally to the rail and assume the lead.

So Peter Horne, having edged his way to the fence, saw his colors flash by first, Chickasaw May a scant half-length behind.

"What d'ye know about that!" a loud-voiced man implored. "Had a hunch on that horse Shenandoah. And there she is—running away with the Oaks."

"Save your kicks," a man at his elbow advised. "Horses that jump into the lead at the break ain't in the habit of running away with races. Your Shenandoah'll about flatten out at the end of the back stretch. Watch Chickasaw May."

That, evidently, was the opinion of several thousands. Shenandoah's reputation as a front runner in the early stages had become fairly well known, thanks to early-morning observers. Only experienced horsemen realized that the first quarter was run in unusually slow time. So was the first half, Peter's filly still holding her short lead over Chickasaw May. Apparently the eastern filly was under restraint, ready at any stage to smother Shenandoah with speed. And, as for that, the remaining four contestants were not very far behind.

DOWN the back stretch they swept, Whistling Bill handriding Shenandoah. "Getting to the first mile pretty soon," he reflected. "Wonder if she is going to curl up."

That idea was in Littrell's mind also. He shook up Chickasaw May, leaned forward and began to ride in earnest. "Get that crowbait outa the way," he shouted. "I'm coming through."

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Whistling Bill raised himself in the stirrups, changed his riding position so that his body was well up the filly's neck. "Keep going!" he called. "Let's show 'em how to do it."

But in the middle of the turn, above the home stretch, Shenandoah slowed perceptibly. Chickasaw May's sudden advance was visible to the stands; and the shouting welled forth in renewed volume. A favorite was coming up.

Peter Horne's lips moved in fervent prayer. He saw Chickasaw May come abreast of Whistling Bill's body. It was an inexorable onrush, well timed, significant.

But why wasn't Whistling Bill using his whip? Peter couldn't understand. Challenged at the most critical stage of the Oaks, just before rounding into the final stretch, the jockey should have gone to work with desperate earnestness. And here he was permitting Chickasaw May to forge up, until the pair were running nose to nose.

"Chickasaw May!" It was an appeal from thousands—a supplication to the god of Chance. Why didn't she pass Shenandoah? Nothing in the way, jockey using his whip frantically. And yet Shenandoah, clinging to the rail, refused to be shaken off.

And still Whistling Bill refused to touch his whip. Instead, with each desperate leap of his mount, the rider flung his body forward, elbows sticking out like spars.

Peter's hopes revived. Maybe Littrell wasn't waiting to pass Shenandoah in the last furlong. Maybe he couldn't! Peter climbed up on the rail, shoving men and women aside. "My hawss!" he screamed. "Come on—come on!"

He was still perched unsteadily, yelling for all he was worth, when Whistling Bill flourished his whip, then brought it down, at the same time letting out a yelp worthy of a Comanche warrior.

Shenandoah appeared fairly to skim through the air, so sudden was the filly's response. The sudden burst of speed opened a gap, with Chickasaw May dropping back. In vain did Littrell shake up his mount, work with body and whip. Chickasaw May was defeated. And Peter Horne, tears streaming, leaped to the track, unnoticed by track policemen. A shabby figure bearing a blanket clambered over the infield fence—Potato Joe—and this pair, ignored as the field thundered by tumultuous thousands, raced toward the finish post, phantomlike in the rapidly settling dust.

Whistling Bill came out from the weighing room, to gaze thoughtfully at Shenandoah; the filly was facing a battery of cameras, weighted with a floral horseshoe. Beside him stood Peter Horne, a very quiet man. The jockey begged a chew of tobacco, glanced up at the timing stand.

"Two full seconds above the track record," he observed. "Reckon we ran that first half in forty-nine—powerful slow. Fooled Littrell—fooled everybody."

"Why," Peter inquired, "did you wait so long—before using the whip?"

Whistling Bill chuckled. "Next thing to outguessing the other fellows is to be on a hawss able to outrun 'em—if you have to. Shenandoah came through when I pulled the crop. That was Potato Joe's idea. Told me yesterday how the filly's ma—Lady McClung—had a habit of slowing up to get her second wind. Shenandoah's just like her, I reckon. We made that last quarter fastest of all."

THEY were walking up the track, Potato Joe leading the filly. The loud-voiced man who had announced his hunch on Peter's entry some minutes before, stood beside the rail, gazing pensively at a pari-mutuel ticket on Chickasaw May. "Shenandoah," he muttered. "I'm a dumbbell. Right purty name—Shenandoah."

Peter heard him. He paused. "My friend—reckon the filly's name is as purty as they manufacture 'em. Means 'daughter of the stars.'

"Funny," he mused, "but I feel like I've paid my debt. Figure I'll step out and buy me a plater or two now." He watched Shenandoah walk up the track, head up, a thoroughbred far from being exhausted.

"Just thinking," he explained to Whistling Bill, "of a passage—not in St. Luke. It's in Revelation: 'And I will give him the morning star.'

"I reckon," he added, "that Potato Joe won the biggest race with Shenandoah—without a purse too—the night he rode for a doctor."

In October EVERYBODY'S—another story of horses and men, by Sam Carson.

A Novelette Complete in This Issue

The Spartan Breed

Patricia Thought Daffy Strangely Lacking in Bulldog Virtues; but That Was Before Daffy Came Up Against Any Real Test

By Henry Francis Granger

Illustration by H. T. Fisk

OF THE first litter of puppies born to Hampshire Bess, an imported English bull matron, but one survived. This puppy was two weeks old when Patricia Folkeston first saw it.

"I want her for my own," she promptly declared, and, at her father's nod of assent: "What is her name?"

Jared Folkeston smiled quizzically. "I had thought of calling her 'Hampshire Bess's Solitaire,' " he said.

"Never!" Patricia protested. "It sounds like—like calamity." She was holding the puppy, a golden-brindle ball, in her cupped hands. "She looks like a daffodil," she mused, "and Daffy is her name."

The announcement came with sudden decision. And a few weeks later, Daffy left the kennels for the great house and Patricia's tireless devotion.

A puppy in the hands of a patient, understanding owner develops rapidly. From the beginning, Daffy's love for her mistress was as unmistakable as the latter's devotion to her. Patricia's was the understanding that sought first to develop the puppy's natural tendencies. Daffy would chase after a ball, and so, shortly, she became a dependable retriever. As the same puppy impulse prompted her to pick up and carry about anything she could lift, patient direction of this that was but the instinct to play, taught her, while still considering it but play, to distinguish a large variety of objects by name and to find and fetch them upon command.

To Daffy the world was a wonderful, friendly place. Never had she known anything but kindness that anticipated her every desire. From Jackstone, who had been the first English bulldog at Beauford, to the roughest laborer upon the place, Daffy found only the friendliness that she herself showed. But at times the puppy's exuberant camaraderie troubled her mistress. Not that Patricia would have had her unfriendly; but the apparent lack of discrimination indicated to the girl the absence of that instant discernment so particularly a bulldog attribute.

"Jackstone was never so," worry led her to say to her father. "Not that he is savage, but he was and is discriminating. Toward us he is excessively affectionate, to others he is friendly, but to most people he is only coldly polite. While Daffy—" Patricia smiled through her puzzlement. "Only yesterday, she greeted a tramp with positive enthusiasm."

"Which but proves her discernment," chuckled her father. "Daffy is not fooled by externals."

Her father's explanation failed to satisfy Patricia. The doubt grew, despite the vehement denial by which she sought to banish it, that, loving, playful and intelligent, Daffy's would never be the fearless resolution, the unswerving dependability, she had always associated with the breed. But if Patricia really believed Daffy lacking in something a bulldog should possess, the belief did not lessen her affection nor tempt her to neglect the puppy's training. In addition to the lesson hour, daily, with the inevitability of breakfast, Patricia and the golden-brindle puppy set out upon their long morning walk. It was upon the return from such a walk that Patricia's vague dissatisfaction vanished and Daffy came fully into her own.

BEAUFORD was more than a game sanctuary and held interests other than those represented by the bulldog kennels. There was also a dairy, and Ferncliff King was the head of the Beauford herd of Guernseys.

Ferncliff King never had the appearance of docility. There was commonly a redness in his eyes, a note in his growling bellow, a speculative purposefulness about his abrupt movements that Jared Folkeston read as malevolence. In this understanding he was wont to caution those who handled King.

"A Guernsey bull is always liable to turn mean," admitted the dairy foreman, Martin. "But King is gentle enough; and besides, I never give him a chance."

"There will be no trouble if there is no carelessness," his employer answered.

"I'm watching him," Martin declared confidently. "All the help are suspicious enough of King to be cautious; that is, all except the new boy. He seems to think Ferncliff King is a joke."

The veiled criticism in the last remark brought the flicker of a smile to Jared Folkeston's face. He had engaged the new boy, taking him on despite the foreman's protest that he did not need another hand. Still smiling, he walked on without further comment.

For a moment Martin stood in silent indecision. He had intended to say more about the new boy. Then, with a frown of annoyance, he went back to his unfinished work.

"Take King down to his paddock, Joe," he called to one of his men.

Joe nodded understandingly. It was not a job he liked, but he knew it had to be done and of all the men, Joe was the most cautious when handling King. Martin appreciated this and gave the bull no further thought after Joe was gone.

The new boy was cleaning out the calf-pens when Joe came into the building and started back toward Ferncliff King's stall.

"What yo' goin' to do?" the boy called after him.

"Take King down to his paddock."

"Le' me take him." The boy tossed aside his broom and came forward, grumbling. "This yere sweepin' an' shovelin' ain't a white man's job nohow."

Joe cast a critical eye over the unfinished work.

"You ain't got the hang of it." Joe was a friendly man. "You lead King down and I'll clean out one of these pens and show you how it should be done," he offered.

Ignoring all but the consent, the boy was on his way to the bull-pen before Joe had finished speaking.

"Lead him out the back way," Joe called after him. "The pole hangs on the wall by the door. Watch out now!"

The bull-staff hung beside the door to the box-stall that was called Ferncliff King's pen. No one ever attempted to lead King without the staff, a long hickory pole with a stout snap at one end to fasten upon the ring in the bull's nose. With this pole the attendant could both lead the bull and hold him off if he attempted to charge.

Without a glance at the pole, the new boy threw the pen door wide. At the sound Ferncliff King whirled around with a snort. The boy took a quick step forward and hooked two fingers through King's nose ring.

"Come on, old cow," he cried contemptuously, as with a jerk upon the ring he turned back to the door.

Ferncliff King crowded forward, squeezing the boy against the door-jamb.

"Git back thar!" With his free hand the boy slapped the bull across the nose.

King shook his head angrily, his eyes reddening. Joe, busy at the other end of the barn, did not glance up.

Crossing the wide space that separated the calf-barn from the horse stables, the new boy continually jerked upon the ring to keep King back, and in angry retaliation for the restless tossing of the great head. He was opposite the stables when the bull jerked free from the restraining fingers.

Shaking his head savagely, tail up, Ferncliff King trotted around in a wide half-circle, and stood facing his tormentor.

With an angry shout the new boy advanced upon him. Bellowing with rage, King lowered his head and pawed furiously, snapping the dirt over his broad back.

The sound of the boy's angry shout and the bull's hoarse bellow brought a teamster to the open stable door. Understanding the situation at a glance, the man called sharply, "Here!"

Startled, the new boy glanced around.

"RUN, you fool! Run!" cried the teamster, reaching out to draw the door shut, leaving but space for the boy to crowd through. And the boy had just squeezed through the narrow opening when the two thousand pounds of blind destruction catapulted against the flimsy door.

The furious impact shattered the boards and, with the overhead wheels driven from the track, the door would have crashed inward if it had not caught and hung upon one penetrating horn. Hanging there, it halted the bull's charge for just the few moments necessary for the teamster to seize the boy's arm and drag him to a stairway.

Ferncliff King took a backward step, shook his head free from the clinging door; and as it clattered forward to the floor the bull trampled over the wreckage and trotted ponderously behind the horse stalls toward an open door on the other side.

The single team in the stable snorted with fright, crowding forward upon their mangers; and as the bull passed, the near horse of the pair lashed out in a furious kick. One iron-shod hoof struck the bull on the flank, driving him thudding against the door-frame before he stumbled forward to the open space in front of the building.

Thoroughly maddened now, King bellowed hoarsely, plunging here and there, red eyes searching for something upon which to vent his fury.

"Keep back! The big bull's loose!" The teamster shouted his warning to any who might be about.

In front, the bull trotted back and forth bellowing challenge and defiance to all the world.

The hoarse bellowing reached the ears of Jared Folkeston just as he was about to leave the great house with Jackstone. At the sound he hurried across the lawn to the grove, following the irregular line of the trees to the slope above the driveway. As he came out from the trees the teamster saw him and again shouted his warning.

"Look out! King's loose!"

As though the last cry had been notice to the bull of the master's approach, King plunged through a stiff hedge and galloped across the drive to the slope beyond, pausing there to paw the turf and growl his rumbling challenge.

Jared Folkeston stopped, standing where a shallow gully ended in a grass-grown depression. The bull, beyond the crest of the ridge, had not seen him. Stooping down, he called Jackstone to him and seized his collar. Perhaps if King was not further excited he might remain where he was until Martin and his men could capture him.

If Jackstone understood what was toward he gave no sign. Trotting but a few feet in front of his master, the bulldog had turned back at the low command, and as the master's hand closed upon his collar, the heavy head had lifted to the face above, the twisted tail wagged slowly, and then again the dog faced forward, standing square and motionless upon his wide legs.

Again Ferncliff King bellowed.

At the sound a quiver stirred the bulldog, rippling under his loose skin, a visible thrill. But Jackstone made no sound, neither did he strain forward against his collar. The rippling thrill swept him and again he was motionless; but to the hand that held the collar came the vibrant tenseness of a restrained eagerness that would flash into action without a second's warning. Instinctively the man's fingers tightened their grip, but the dog did not stir.

Stooping forward, clinging to Jackstone's collar, Jared Folkeston could not see King, but his eyes watched the crest where King must first appear if he moved forward. So watching, he did not see Patricia as she came around a clump of shrubbery massed at the end of the stables and walked slowly toward him.

Wearing stout walking shoes, a short tweed skirt and a bright red sweater-coat, Patricia came unheedingly on, Daffy trotting beside her. She had heard Ferncliff King's growling bellow, but paid no heed. She had often heard the same challenge rumbling up from the paddock, and it had not occurred to her that the bull might be at large. She had covered half the distance

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to where her father stooped, holding Jackstone, and was little more than the same distance from King, when both King and her father saw her.

THE bull saw her first, and with a snorting roar galloped up the back of the slope to the crest. Jared Folkeston saw him as he topped the rise, and at the same moment he saw Patricia. The hand on Jackstone's collar relaxed its grip as he snapped erect.

"Pat!" he cried, plunging forward. "Run for that tree!" He was running toward her as he called, waving his hand toward the only semblance of safety, seeking to cut in between her and the bull.

The tree was a small one but it was the nearest, even partial, protection from that charging fury. If King struck the tree it might withstand the shock and afford her the chance to dodge to another shelter.

"Run!" he cried again. And Patricia, after a moment of bewildered hesitation, turned and ran swiftly for the tree.

But Jackstone had taken in the situation with understanding as true as that of his master. Furthermore, Jackstone's thought was not for the momentary expedient, for a chance to avoid the issue, to escape. The bulldog acted to destroy the menace. When the master's hand released his collar, he shot straight for the point where the angle of his charge would intercept that of the bull.

Ferncliff King, storming down the grade at incredible speed, considering his vast bulk, ready to lower his head in the final blind rush upon the taunting red shape that fled before him, saw Jackstone standing squarely in his path, less than a score of feet away.

Behind and at one side, Jared Folkeston ran, seeking only to get between his daughter and the danger that threatened her, to secure for her, even at the cost of his life, the second of time that might save her. Beyond, and yet scarcely twenty yards from the on-rushing bull, Patricia was running for the tree.

Jared Folkeston knew, even as he strove to increase his straining effort, that he would be too late to intercept King's charge. Dimly he saw Jackstone standing, and the hope flashed that the dog might deflect the bull from his course, might give him just the one chance to throw himself in the bull's path. Patricia saw nothing but the tree, realized only the desperate need to run. Far behind came Martin, followed by several men.

Ten feet from the standing dog, King dropped his head and charged with all the speed and fury of his blind madness. But the charge did not toss the dog from his path. Just how it was done none of those who saw could say with surety. Jared Folkeston only saw, in one breathless flash, the dog, motionless, almost under the feet of the charging fury, and then the bull's huge bulk plunging, half somersaulting to the ground. But when Martin and another threw themselves upon King's head to hold him down, the animal was supine upon the ground, and Jackstone, straining back, body flat to the earth, was holding him there, while Daffy's needle-like teeth were locked upon the bull's lower lip.

It was at dinner that evening, when father and daughter had recovered their composure, that Patricia said:

"There is no dog like an English bulldog, Daddy."

"We have every reason to think that, Patty," her father answered.

"How did Jackstone know? How did he dare?" Patricia's voice was reverent. "And dear little Daffy!" The voice broke in a sob.

"We know Jackstone's courage is absolute," said her father. "But where the knowledge and the skill came from we do not know. It may have been instinct, and it may have been something deeper than instinct, an imperishable transmission, knowledge buried in his subconsciousness." He smiled whimsically. "No doubt I am talking nonsense. I do not know. But for hundreds of years Jackstone's ancestors were trained to do just that thing. Bull-baiting, when finally prohibited in England, had become so common a practise that practically every beef butchered for market was first baited. It had come to be the accepted belief that the flesh of animals so treated possessed particular excellence of flavor."

Patricia nodded but her thoughts were upon the puppy.

"And I imagined Daffy lacking in something a bull dog should possess," she murmured contritely. "I thought because she is so excessively friendly that she would never recognize an enemy." Then curiosity momentarily overpowered contrition. "How did she get there? She was right beside me when you called, and I saw that dreadful bull and ran."

"I do not remember that I saw her, Patty. But Daffy, while only a puppy, is just as much bulldog as Jackstone. Instead of following you, when you ran for the tree, the puppy must have run to Jackstone, and when he threw King, Daffy seized hold, too."

Patricia's eyes widened.

"It was wonderful!"

"Hardly as remarkable as though she had held back, Pat, dear. It's in the blood."

Patricia refused to indorse any such commonplace view of her puppy's heroism. In the girl's eyes that particular puppy had become a super-dog. But her fervid eulogium brought no smile of ridicule to her father's face.

WHEN the excitement occasioned by Ferncliff King's escape subsided, Jared Folkeston sought Martin.

"How did it happen, Martin?" he asked.

"It was that new boy!" growled Martin. He added defiantly, "I've just fired him!"

Nothing of the annoyance he felt showed in Jared Folkeston's face.

"You are comparatively a stranger here, Martin," he began evenly. "But you may have heard of a settlement called Oystertown."

"I've heard of it," Martin admitted. "My men seem scared to talk about those folks, but I've heard the gamekeepers say a plenty. They call 'em a bad lot."

"They are all of that. Now, I want you to understand the situation, Martin. Pothunting has always been one of Oystertown's sources of income. In the old days, when it was held by careless landlords, Beauford was their favorite poaching ground. They have never conceded my right to protect the wild game and shut them out. We have had serious trouble with them, but I was beginning to hope that they had accepted the inevitable." For a moment he remained thoughtfully silent.

"New deviltry is brewing, Martin," he continued abruptly. "I have no idea what it may be, but I know more about that settlement than they suspect. They go in for anything proscribed that may be profitable, from pirating the oyster beds to rum-running; but one thing no Oystertowner was ever known to do, and that is, to hire out to work upon the land. The evil genius of the settlement is a hunchback, known as Finback. It is Finback who plans and prods them into action. They are primitive folk, and this Finback is, in effect, the 'medicine man,' and Long Pete is the 'war chief.' Finback has no reason to suspect that I know anything about him, but I am satisfied that Finback is making medicine."

Martin's interest was evident. For the moment the annoyances of the morning were forgotten.

"What do you think they are up to now?" he asked.

"The new boy is Finback's son," Jared Folkeston said slowly.

"And you hired him, knowing that!" gasped Martin.

"Because I knew that."

Martin was puzzled. "Lord, you took a chance!"

"Only the chance I seek, to find out why he was sent here. I know he never came for the job or the wages. It is because he is here, that I know trouble is brewing."

Martin was thinking hard.

"The fault was mine, from the beginning, Mr. Folkeston," he said at last. "I should have told Joe, and the boy, too, that he was not to touch King. I'm the one who should be fired."

At this vindication of his judgment of Martin, Jared Folkeston's annoyance vanished. But he only said, "What do you purpose to do now?"

"Tell the boy that he can have another chance, of course, and then watch every move he makes."

Satisfied that Finback's boy would not long succeed in hiding his purpose from Martin and McPherson, the head gamekeeper, Jared Folkeston said nothing of his suspicion to the family, and Beauford apparently settled down in the old calm.

Patricia continued the long morning walks with Daffy, and the golden-brindle puppy was hardening into wonderful puppy condition; but the lessons were discontinued. The puppy had acquired new dignity in her mistress's eyes. Teaching common tricks to Daffy, who, untaught, had attacked a monster like Ferncliff King, suddenly appeared incongruous. "As grotesquely inappropriate as to expect an Ace to tat," Patricia decided.

As the days grew warmer, Patricia and Daffy walked less and canoed more. And what was at first aimless idling over the shady water lanes developed into systematic exploration of the numerous creeks and bayous that drained the eastern lowlands of Beauford. Then, tiring of the known trails, the girl turned boldly beyond the border.

UNTIL now, Patricia had been afraid to venture into the Great Swamp, that stretched for miles beyond Beauford, a wilderness of cane and reeds, tangled jungle and gloomy, moss-hung woods, veined in an intricate network of sluggish waterways. With Daffy sitting alertly erect upon her special cushion in the bow, Patricia was prepared to venture anywhere. In her heart she laughed at this new assurance of security. She understood that though Daffy might possess the courage and determination of Jackstone, she was but a half-grown puppy, and her courage could but express itself in a futile gesture. But admitting that the puppy could not prevail against that beyond her own strength, did not bring back to Patricia the old timidity. Daily now the canoe followed new trails through the cane and reeds, drove over the mysterious black waters of forest-rimmed lagoons and rippled the bayous spreading like great smears of spilled ink through the heavy woods, far from sight or sound of civilization.

Then came the day when she forced the canoe through a narrow opening in the reeds that widened into a hitherto undiscovered waterway leading deep into a sweet-gum swamp. And where the sweet-gum gave place to a heavier growth of swamp oak and cedar, she came upon a pair of nesting egrets, where none were supposed to have come for more than half a generation.

The report of this discovery was discredited at home. Indignant at the imputation that she had mistaken some other heron for an egret, Patricia undertook to pilot her father to the nest. They failed to find it.

"It's there, somewhere, and I shall find it again!" Patricia answered the good-natured chaffing. With unwearying persistence she searched daily for that opening through the reeds that led to the sweet-gum swamp. And the repeated journeying over the same course brought to the watchful spy the information he sought.

It was then that Martin reported his conclusions as to why Finback's son came and remained at Beauford.

"From the first he has been sneaking away in the morning," said Martin. "I didn't have time to follow him myself, but Mac has been on the job every day since you spoke to him about the boy. That boy is watching your daughter, Mr. Folkeston."

With impassive face Jared Folkeston questioned the man.

"Mac says the boy knows the swamps like a rabbit, and that he knows just where Miss Patricia is in the habit of going. Mac says, also, that she has been going down Middle Bayou, toward the Great Swamp, every day lately. He's worried, Mr. Folkeston. He says it ain't safe for her to go in the Great Swamp alone, especially after the way this boy acts."

Jared Folkeston was less worried about Patricia than puzzled as to the purpose back of the boy's action. He could not believe that Finback contemplated actual attack upon his daughter. But the more he dwelt upon the possibility the less improbable and bizarre it appeared. For what other purpose would Finback set his boy to spying upon her movements? Regretful now that he had not advised Patricia of his suspicion, he hurried back to the house. Hereafter Pat's canoeing should not extend beyond the boundaries of Beauford. But not yet entirely convinced that it threatened her, he was still puzzling over the portent of all Martin had reported, seeking some other explanation, even as he sent a maid to find Patricia.

"Miss Patricia has not come home yet," the maid reported.

PATRICIA had started out in the morning with renewed assurance that this day she would find that elusive opening through the reeds. Until she should rediscover the egrets' nest no one would believe that it existed, and she was at once too much woman, and still too much child to endure the impugnment of having been mistaken. Repeated failure but spurred her on. She was determined to continue the search until she found that hidden opening and her father, too, had seen the nest.

This morning Patricia set out with new hope. Thinking it over the night before, she had come to the conclusion that her failure to find the hidden opening was due to having followed the Middle Bayou too far before skirting the reeds and searching closely. Each day she had gone a little farther before beginning the real search. Convinced now that the spot was much nearer Beauford than she had supposed, she paddled on hopefully, Daffy alertly upright upon her cushion in the bow.

"We are going to find it today," the girl confided to Daffy, and the well-trained puppy wriggled agreement without shifting her position in the sensitive craft.

They were little more than a mile beyond the boundaries of Beauford, but more than twice that distance along the twisting course the canoe must follow, when a punt rounded a bend and came jerkily toward them over the sluggish water. It was the first craft she had encountered, and in her surprise Patricia paused in mid-stroke, her paddle trailing.

The approaching boat carried two men; one, standing in the stern, poled leisurely, and the other, seated amidships, moved his pole indolently, paddle-wise, over the side. Neither man appeared to notice the canoe and after the first hesitation Patricia paddled calmly on. The punt was moving up the narrow mid-channel but there was room for the canoe to pass on either side. She looked curiously at the men as they drew near, but beyond the fact that the man standing in the stern was tall, their appearance made no definite impression upon her. The tall man stood sidewise in the punt as he poled, his back turned upon the canoe, while the one forward sat with bowed head, apparently gazing into the water along the punt's side. From their hair and hands, Patricia knew they were white men, and this was her only definite conclusion in regard to them.

Then, suddenly, she remembered that her purpose there was to find that opening in the reeds and that several yards of dense growth had been passed unscanned. With a last glance to make sure the canoe, as headed, would clear the punt, Patricia drew in her paddle and twisting about looked back along the edge of the reeds.

She looked carefully, noting every slightest indentation, scanning the surface of the water for sign of an intersecting current. Satisfied at last that she had not passed the spot while her attention was distracted by the men in the punt, she was about to turn, after a last backward glance, when the canoe lurched sharply. Startled, but automatically steadying her rocking craft as she twisted quickly about, Patricia saw the punt, almost touching the canoe's side, and the hand of the man sitting forward jerk back, barely escaping the savage snap of Daffy's heavy jaws.

Sitting silent and motionless as the punt drew up, Daffy had leaped to the attack without a sound of warning when the stranger's hand reached out to seize the canoe.

Digging her paddle into the water, Patricia strove desperately to swing away from the punt. She had succeeded in effecting a backing half-turn, when the smaller man seized a boat-hook and, reaching out, fastened upon the canoe. Growling hoarsely, Daffy tore impotently at the gripping iron.

"Drown that purp!" growled the tall man, who still stood at his pole.

AT THE harsh command that threatened Daffy, a flash of anger dispelled the mist of bewilderment and fear and Patricia realized for the first time that both men were masked, their eyes gleaming malevolently through jagged holes cut in strips of stained canvas that covered the upper half of their faces. At the unmistakable portent of the masks—she swayed dizzily and water and reedy shore merged in a heaving mist through which she seemed to be swiftly falling. Gasping, half swooning, one outflung hand struck the gunwale sharply. The stinging hurt arrested the swift fall into oblivion. With an effort she shook away the mists, rallying all her faculties in the thought of Daffy's need.

"Come here, Daffy!" she commanded, her voice hollow in her own ears.

Reluctantly, with many backward glances, the puppy came.

The smaller man was steadily drawing the canoe to the punt. With Daffy in her arms, Patricia faced him defiantly.

"You shan't hurt her!"

"I reckon thet depends on how yo' acts," the tall man answered. "Yo' come erlong quiet, an' yo' kin keep yo' dog. If yo' don't, we drown the pup, an' yo' comes anyhow."

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"What do you intend to do with me?" she asked, steadying her voice with an effort.

The smaller man had drawn the canoe alongside and now held it by his hands. Daffy struggled silently to escape from the restraining arms.

"Hang on tew thet pup!" the tall man cautioned.

Patricia clasped the golden-brindle puppy in new appreciation of that she had refused to consider. Daffy, who never before had displayed anything but friendliness to any one, had recognized menace and would act as promptly and bravely to destroy it as would Jackstone. But anything the puppy might do would be but a vain gesture that would destroy her. The pitiful futility of such a sacrifice fired the girl. She had Daffy to fight for, Daffy, who would sacrifice herself without a moment's hesitation. Under the inspiration of the puppy's courage, that yet must depend upon her, what might happen to her became of concern, primarily, as it might affect Daffy.

"WHAT do you intend to do?" she asked again. This time her voice was resolute. "My father will make you men pay dearly for this!" She burst forth in unrestrained indignation.

"I reckon he's goin' to do the payin'," chuckled the smaller man.

"Shet up!" snapped the other. And then he, too, put aside his pole and grasped the canoe. "We ain't aimin' to hurt yo', miss, if yo' acts sensible."

His voice was harsh but Patricia understood that he was stating a fact rather than uttering a threat. It both reassured her and emphasized the seriousness of her predicament.

"If you are sensible, you will go away," she answered.

"Climb in the punt," came the harsh command.

For a moment Patricia hesitated. Then, clasping Daffy tight, she stepped from the canoe to the punt.

"Over with it!" cried the tall man.

"Thet'll give 'em somethin' to think erbout," chuckled the other.

Patricia sank upon a seat, her knees suddenly weak. Now, in the punt, her position seemed more desperate than when she had been, no less a captive, in the canoe. And a sob rose in her throat at the thought that her father would find that overturned canoe and believe her to be drowned.

Understanding that her mistress was in trouble, Daffy renewed her struggle to escape from the encircling arms, growling menacingly.

"I wish I had your grit, Daffy," the girl whispered, bowing her head over the struggling puppy; "and that you were as old as Jackstone!" she finished in a burst of passion. Then again she stiffened in new resolution. She would not be less dauntless than this six-months puppy that was ready to give battle to all the world. And the influence of Daffy's fearlessness sustained her as the men poled steadily on.

Occasionally the outlaws spoke to each other as they penetrated ever deeper into the Great Swamp, but neither again addressed the girl. Holding to Daffy's collar, Patricia noted each twist and turn, strove to mark down in memory each distinctive landmark. But despite her watchfulness, as the outlaws turned upon intersecting waterways, she lost all idea of their course. A glance at her wrist-watch showed that it was four o'clock when the punt thrust out from the narrow way to a wide stretch of open water. Here the men laid aside their poles and, turning to the right, paddled along a densely wooded shore.

Then, suddenly, Patricia understood where they were. She had never been there before but she knew that midway of the Great Swamp was a lake of considerable size, the only large body of open water within the confines of the swamp. And the understanding brought a new thought to cheer her. The outlaws had brought her there to keep her securely hidden, and sooner or later they must land upon one of the islands of higher ground. Then if she could manage to gain possession of the punt they would be unable to follow her. Once alone in the boat and a few feet from shore she would be free.

Turning about, she strove to mark the opening through which they had come out to the lake. Even now it had disappeared. But when the men put aside their paddles and poled into another ditch-like opening, she imagined this egress to be on the opposite side of the lake from their entrance. That they had turned back and were retracing their way over a watercourse opening from the lake less than a quarter of a mile from their point of entrance never occurred to her.

THE first gloom of night was settling down upon the swamp when the punt was thrust up on a narrow strip of mud at the foot of a low bank. The smaller man sprang ashore.

"This is yo' hotel, miss," he grinned.

The tall man stood silently behind, waiting for her to land. Again Daffy struggled in her arms, growling fiercely. A well-grown English bulldog, at six months, is far too heavy for a lap-dog. Cramped and stiffened by the long hours in the punt and the almost constant burden of the puppy, Patricia now restrained her with difficulty. She had no leash and she dare not set Daffy down, but when the man behind growled an order, she sprang to her feet and scrambled ashore with Daffy in her arms.

Standing on the mud strip at the water edge, Patricia had lifted Daffy to the bank behind and stood holding her by the collar, when another punt came slowly around the bend above.

As they stood watching, the single occupant of the punt stopped poling and shouted across the water, "Go on!"

"Come," the tall man said, and turning, scrambled up the bank.

Clinging to Daffy's collar, half dragged up by the eager puppy, Patricia gained the top of the bank. From there a weed-grown path led back through a tangle of underbrush. With Daffy in her arms, Patricia followed the tall outlaw, while the other brought up the rear. A few yards back from the water, but hidden by the vine-tangled underbrush until they were almost upon them, huddled a cluster of dilapidated, abandoned cabins. Walking to the second one, the man ahead threw open the door.

"Yo' go in thar!"

Through the open door Patricia saw a single small room with an uneven puncheon floor, and what appeared to be a bundle of quilts tossed in a corner. There was no furniture of any kind.

"Git on!" the outlaw ordered as she hesitated, reaching to seize her arm.

With a quick movement Patricia evaded his grasp, almost springing through the open door, with Daffy snarling in her arms. The door slammed behind her and Patricia set the puppy down and turned to survey her surroundings. The cabin was built of logs, mud-chinked, with a single small window and the door. Realizing that the light would soon be gone, she examined first the bundle of quilts in the corner. To her relief they proved to be clean. Then she carefully explored the room. In another corner were a few sticks, a moldy shoe and a rusting tomato can. There was nothing else.

She was turning back to the corner, where Daffy had promptly found a bed upon the quilts, when her glance fell upon the window and she saw that the sash was gone. Scarce believing, she softly crossed the floor and tried the door. It was securely fastened upon the outside. It was true! They had locked her in, leaving an open window.

It was rapidly growing dark, and with darkness would disappear the danger that the window might be noticed this night. She was confident she could find the punt. She would wait until the men were asleep and then she would climb through the window and go. Once upon the water she would be safe. And upon the water her father would find her. Thrilling joyously in the certainty of escape, she settled down beside Daffy to wait as patiently as she might until the time for action came.

It grew dark. Twice Patricia had dozed and roused herself, when voices sounded outside and there was a scraping as the fastening was removed from the door. Then the door opened and two men entered, one carrying a smoking lantern.

"Here's yo' supper."

Patricia recognized the voice of the tall man, but the lantern was carried low and in the dim light the faces and upper bodies of the men were but vague shapes in the darkness.

"Why don't yo' clean thet lantern?" a querulous voice questioned.

Patricia started. It was not the voice of the smaller outlaw. Then a glare of light blinded her. Startled, she cried out in alarm before she realized that it was only a flashlight. Then the light turned from her and swept the room, to rest upon the open window.

"Look at thet!" snarled the stranger. "Yo' lock the door an' leave the winder open."

"They ain't a nail erbout the place," the other answered angrily. "An' besides, she couldn't climb through thet."

"Th' hell she couldn't! Yo' got to tie her up tonight!"

The words wrung a moan of despair from Patricia.

The stranger laughed evilly.

"Thet spoils yo'—" he began, to break off with a snarling oath as he jerked back, stumbling, half falling against the wall. "Hold thet light yere!" he screamed.

The man with the lantern sprang forward. At the sudden movement the dim light flared up and went out. From the darkness came the sound of a furious struggle, of panting, inarticulate imprecations, a heavy crash against the half-open door.

WHILE Patricia had dozed despite her effort to remain awake, Daffy had slept soundly. But the first faint sound outside the door roused the puppy. If Patricia's hand had grasped her collar Daffy would have growled. But Daffy, awakening to the knowledge that she was free, got silently to her feet. Even when the door opened and the men entered in the dim lantern light, the puppy stood quiet and motionless. But at the sound of the tall man's voice the puppy stiffened. All day Daffy had been set for action against the men she recognized as enemies, but ever the arms of her mistress held her and she might only growl her defiance. Now, here was the same menace and she was free. The English bulldog, unrestrained and ready to act, wastes no breath in threats. And Daffy recognized the menace and, as clear, her duty to destroy it. Through the gloom she saw the form of the man who held the flashlight, heard the threatening snarl in his voice. The words meant nothing to the puppy but the tone was unmistakable. Here was some one who would harm her mistress.

Daffy understood the need, but nothing of her puppy limitations. She did not understand that she was young and weak and that the odds against her were too great for hope. The size and quality of her antagonist were of no concern to Daffy. Whether it were a maddened bull that outweighed her by tons, or a man who towered above her, made no difference. Hers was the gentleness that would never attack wantonly, and the courage that would never consider the odds. No other dog and no beast of the jungle will attack against the overwhelming odds a bulldog will face.

And quietly, a step and a pause, Daffy had worked forward, unnoted in the dim light. Of the two men, the puppy's instinct recognized the stranger as the more menacing. And Patricia's cry of dismay was, to Daffy, the trumpet call to action. With a rush the puppy was upon the man, her wide jaws fastening upon his leg.

The door, thrown wide, banged again and again against the log wall under the convulsive heaving of the contorting shape that jerked back and forth, striking against it, screaming curses.

After repeated attempts the other man succeeded in relighting the lantern. A sudden gust of wind through the open door extinguished it again. Then came a wild cry of savage elation and the thud of something soft and heavy swung once and then again with thudding force against the log wall.

"Strike a match—my flashlight—on the flo'!" the stranger panted.

A match flickered dimly, and then another.

"Yere 'tis." The beam of the flashlight cut through the darkness, marked out the stranger, bent over, both hands grasping his right leg between the ankle and the knee, then swept to the still quivering form of Daffy outstretched on the puncheon floor.

"Hit tore hell aout of my leg, befo' I got him loose an' bashed him agin the wall!" the stranger snarled. "See if he's dead!"

With a cry of horror and grief, Patricia darted forward.

"Git back thar!" With a sweep of his arm the tall man hurled her back.

Sobbing wildly, Patricia sank down upon the quilts.

Again the flashlight swung back to the puppy and with his foot the tall man heaved the now motionless body into a corner.

"Hit's dead, all right," he said.

STRETCHED upon the worn quilts, crying broken-heartedly, Patricia heard the tall man's verdict. Brave little Daffy had made the vain sacrifice she had striven all day to prevent. A wave of remorse swept her. Why had she forgotten? Never could she forgive herself, she thought in bitter contrition. Then she heard the stranger shouting through the darkness and an answering cry from the cabin beyond.

"Fetch a light rope down yere!"

Carrying the flashlight, the tall man turned to Patricia, holding out a tin dish.

"Eat yo' supper befo' we tie yo'."

But grief and remorse had banished all desire for food.

"Do you suppose I would eat your food, you murderers!" she cried furiously.

"Suit yo'self," the outlaw answered indifferently.

"What fo' yo'-all want a rope?"

Patricia recognized the voice of the smaller man.

"Did yo' bring it?" growled the stranger.

"Yere 'tis."

Patricia fought desperately but the two men who had brought her there bound her while the third held the light. Prone upon the quilts, with her ankles roped together and her hands securely tied behind her back, with the rope from her ankles tied around a worn puncheon, preventing her from rolling from her corner, Patricia heard them refastening the door, and then, for a time, all was mercifully blank.

When realization came again she imagined that she had been asleep. In the first awakening the impenetrable blackness seemed to press upon her with physical weight, to smother her. She moaned, tossing about in her bonds, conscious only of her pain and the sense of suffocation. But the twisting about relieved cramped muscles and as her breath came easier her brain cleared and the events of the night stood out sharply.

Vividly she recalled the hope in which she had waited with Daffy in her arms. And in the memory, her present plight, the pain of the cramping ropes, loss of that one chance of escape, even her ultimate fate, were, together, less than the loss of Daffy. Grief and loneliness overwhelmed her and again she cried bitterly, as a child might do. In the abandon of her grief she heard no sound when something soft and cold touched her face. With a gasp of terror she jerked back at the contact. But the thing followed and again touched her. And now a warm tongue was licking the tears from her cheek.

"Daffy!" she sobbed, incredulous, not daring to believe, yet thrilling with joy unspeakable in the sudden, new hope. Then a foot pressed cautiously upon her shoulder and the wet tongue swept her cheeks, her eyes, brushed the edges of her hair, enveloped her. "Daffy! Daffy!" she sobbed, in joy now, straining to press her face against the puppy's soft, yielding body.

For a time joy in the knowledge that Daffy lived blotted out every other thought and it was Daffy's, rather than her own, plight that brought again to Patricia the thought of escape. If the man who had almost killed Daffy found her alive on the morrow he would make certain of his vicious purpose. And he would find her there, alive, and Daffy would attack him again, and the next time Daffy could not hope to escape.

At first the thought numbed her. Then the girl's fighting spirit revived. The window was still open. Was there not, helpless though she appeared, some way out? But twisting about, straining at the cords that bound her, availed nothing. Exhausted by her futile efforts, Patricia sank back, Daffy stretched beside her.

This time Patricia did not fall asleep. And the persistent thought to circumvent the apparently hopeless brought its reward. In the far corner she had seen an empty tin can. With this can it might be possible— Speculation as to this ceased abruptly. How could she get that can? Tied as she was she could not roll to it. Then she turned to Daffy, her voice trembling with eagerness. "Daffy!"

The golden-brindle puppy crowded closer, her twisted tail twitching.

"Daffy! Go fetch!"

The puppy was on her feet now.

"Find the can, Daffy," she said slowly. "Go find the can! Fetch it, Daffy! Fetch the can!"

PATRICIA could not see but she heard the puppy snuffling, searching the floor in the blackness.

"Fetch it, Daffy! Fetch the can!"

Daffy pattered back and laid something beside her. Twisting about, half turning, Patricia sought to identify the object by the pressure of her body upon it. Plainly it was not the tin can. Then she remembered the shoe.

"Not this, Daffy. Not the shoe. The can, Daffy. Fetch the can!"

Again Daffy left her side. Then she heard the rattle of the can as it rolled under Daffy's efforts to seize it.

"That's it, Daffy!" she cried softly. "Fetch it, Daffy! Fetch it!"

And then Daffy brought it. Patricia knew by the sound as the puppy dropped it at her side that this time it was the can.

But Patricia's first efforts were defeated by her own eagerness. Then she steadied. Turning over and wriggling backward until her bound hands touched the can, she gripped it in her fingers. It was open, the top hinged by a narrow uncut section of tin. Her exploring fingers felt the rough edge of the metal and the contact fired her with new hope. If she could bring it to bear with any force it would, in time, cut through the rope. And in time, with patience and infinite exertion, she succeeded in severing a strand and her hands were free. Seizing Daffy in her arms, under the reaction of her partial success, she fell to sobbing again, slumping back upon the quilts.

It was minutes later when Patricia rallied with a start of dismay. She could not see the face of her watch, and although it was still ticking the night might be far spent. Her only hope was to get away before it grew light. Feverishly she worked upon the rope about her ankles and this time the effort necessary was slight. At the first effort to stand she fell, but when she had succeeded in hobbling to the window her feet felt better.

Patricia never understood just how she managed to climb through that small window with Daffy in her arms, but she stood outside at last. There was no moon but the stars were shining, and even this dim light seemed bright compared to the blackness of the cabin.

Resisting the impulse to hurry, Patricia picked her way cautiously past the other cabin, where she supposed the men to be sleeping, and found the entrance to the path. It was darker here, under the great bushes, but the very density made it easier to follow along the only opening. She reached the bank at almost the exact spot at which she had climbed it. From there the bayou was hidden under a low-hanging mist and the punt was invisible. It was only when she had climbed down to the narrow strip of mud at the edge of the water that she saw two boats, drawn up side by side.

The second punt was smaller than the one in which she had come and unquestionably belonged to the third man. To insure her escape she must manage to take away both boats. Away from the bank, with both punts in her possession, for the first time since the smaller man's boat-hook fastened upon her canoe, Patricia felt safe. But the thrill of satisfaction died out in doubt. Which way should she go?

Believing that she was south of the lake, she reasoned that the third man had come from the settlements below and in that direction lay the nearest safety. Every desire prompted her to try to reach home, but judgment warned her to make for the nearer towns to the south. And so, reluctantly, Patricia turned in the direction from which the stranger had come. She did not waver but the decision chilled her. Proceeding in this direction she could not hope to come upon her father or.his men. Ultimate escape must depend upon her own strength and cunning. And so, turning, as she thought, away from home, Patricia chanced upon the shortest, most direct way to Beauford.

Fifty yards away the landing had vanished from her sight. She and Daffy were alone upon a narrow stretch of inky water, hemmed in on either side by jungles of moss- and vine-grown trees, scattered stretches of bottomless morass, miles of cane-brake and reeds, and cutting through all a network of tangling waterways. The chilling thought of this came but Patricia put it resolutely aside, refusing to despair. She had Daffy, she had escaped from her captors, and with both boats in her possession she was the victor thus far; and in this good fortune was the augury of ultimate escape. Her immediate concern should be only to put the greatest possible distance between her and those cabins before day.

FIGHTING down her dread of the dank blackness, the fear of losing her way and becoming more hopelessly lost in the trackless swamp, and the greater horror of coming upon some confederate of the three from whom she had escaped, Patricia poled steadily on, striving not to hurry, not to give way to panic, to conserve her strength.

But with the heart to do, she found herself sadly lacking in strength and skill. She knew nothing of the technique of driving a punt over the water and the pole was too heavy for her strength. With the other boat trailing behind, her lateral progress almost equaled her advance. A half-hour of labor that left her aching and weary had barely carried her around the first bend. She realized that to cover, in this fashion, the miles that lay between her and safety was an impossibility. It was necessary, at once, to abandon one punt.

Far from questioning, Patricia welcomed

the idea. She would secrete the abandoned punt in the reeds; and, so hidden, on the far side of the bayou, it would be as inaccessible to the outlaws as though miles away. But it proved too dark to find an opening that would hide the boat and Patricia simply thrust the punt as far into the dense growth as her strength permitted, and to hold it there drove a pole in the mud on either side. Then she drew up the smaller boat and climbed aboard with Daffy in her arms.

Progress now was more rapid and vastly easier. At first Patricia seemed to have gained new strength. Then, again, the strain told. She who could paddle the light canoe tirelessly for miles found that poling the heavier craft caused her hands to blister, her arms to grow leaden, while sharp pains caught at her side with every lift and thrust, and almost irresistible weariness pressed down upon her. Time and again, she almost fell asleep as she stood, and then she would sway and totter to awake with a jerk to existence that was all sharp pain until weariness again numbed her. And following each arousing came the longing to throw herself down in the bottom of the punt and sleep.

The night grew blacker and the stars faded. Dimly Patricia realized that the dawn was near. She strove to estimate the distance covered, to number the hours during which she had struggled on, but her mind refused to concentrate upon this that was but a nightmare of blackness and pain. But until all movement became automatic and her brain failed to register any conscious impression, Patricia kept her feet. Then, at a bend she never saw, the punt kept straight across the narrow channel and thrust into the reeds on the farther side. The boat was barely moving under her nerveless thrust but at the slight jar of the sliding top in the yielding reeds, she staggered and sank limply down. She was asleep even as she fell. Bounding forward, Daffy licked the white, still face, whining anxiously. But Patricia slept on and the puppy crouched beside her, wide-eyed, staring into the darkness.

So Patricia slept through the dawn and until the sun shone hot upon her face and she awoke to the tugging of Daffy, dragging at her, worrying her shoulder, growling low as she strove to rouse her. The first attempt to sit up brought a stab of pain that completed her awakening.

The punt had thrust full length into thin, straggling rushes that had offered little resistance to its slight headway, while all about scattered the thin edge of a heavier timber growth beyond. Then her glance swept to the long stretch of water behind, and in the distance she saw a boat bearing down upon her. It was too far away to distinguish faces but plainly she made out the forms of three men.

A boat coming from that direction could hold only the three from whom she had escaped. That they, somehow, had located and regained the punt she had abandoned, Patricia never doubted. A wave of nauseous fear swept her as she realized the hopelessness of trying to escape them now by poling. Her torn hands were stiffened and almost useless, and if the deep sleep in the bottom of the punt had refreshed her, she was only conscious of pain, hunger and weariness. Nevertheless, sight of the pursuing boat aroused the determination to make one last effort.

ALL Patricia's understanding of her situation had come as with a flash of intuition, and the same instantaneous perception embraced the one chance to avoid detection. It was probable that the reeds, thin as they were, still hid her from the distant boat, and hope lay in pushing in further. With difficulty she got to her knees, not daring to stand erect even if she were able. To grasp the pole was torture to her torn hands and sore muscles, but she thrust it down and pushed with all her strength. Slowly the punt moved forward, scraping through the reeds that checked its headway as soon as she raised the pole for another thrust. But half a dozen boat lengths on, the way grew clearer, opening to a narrow channel through the jungle growth.

Watching anxiously behind, Patricia followed the twisting course until the pursuing punt was hidden by the intervening reeds and bushes. But her last glimpse showed the three men drawn dangerously near. Any movement in the rushes or the sound of further progress might bring detection now, and Patricia stretched full length in the bottom of the punt, one hand clasped around Daffy's muzzle. She had done all she could and now might only lie

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quiet and hope that the men would pass without noticing the trail of her boat through the reeds.

Lying there she heard the lap of water against a blunt bow, the scrape of poles, the murmur of low voices. From the sound she knew the men were poling furiously, and then, that they were passing her hiding-place. Daffy, too, heard and struggled to wrest her jaws from the restraining fingers. Then, for the first time, Patricia saw that the golden-brindle head was torn and matted with blood. At the realization the girl's overstrained nerves gave way and she clung to the puppy, talking brokenly.

"You saved me, Daffy, saved me after they almost killed you," she sobbed wildly, all thought of the necessity for restraint gone. But the paroxysm passed; calmer, she found a handkerchief and, dipping it in the water, bathed the torn head.

She was so employed, forgetful of the danger that had passed beyond the bend, when a great white shape flopped ponderously away from its perch in a distant tree-top. Looking up in startled amaze, she made out the rough form of an egrets' nest. At the sight, other objects before unnoticed impressed her and she saw that among the trees were scattered sweet-gums. Patricia knew of but one place where the sweet-gum grew and she knew of but one such nest. Now her eyes were searching widely about, seeking the identifying objects she had marked down when once before she came upon such a nest. And then she saw a grotesquely twisted cedar, and beyond the naked branches of a dead swamp oak.

There was no longer room for doubt. It was incredible; all her reasoning told her that she was miles from this place; nevertheless, this was the egrets' nest she had found once before and lost. There might be another egrets' nest in the Great Swamp but there could not be another such twisted cedar, with a blasted oak in just that juxtaposition. Now she knew where she was, and where, beyond, lay home and safety. But the thrill of joy in the hope faded as it came. Beyond, too, between her and safety, were the three outlaws, seeking her.

THERE was uneasiness when Patricia failed to appear at luncheon, and an hour later Jared Folkeston was decidedly worried. Another hour passed before anxiety overpowered the belief to which he clung, that whatever evil was brewing was not directed against his daughter. But when he decided to act events moved rapidly. It was her father who found Patricia's overturned canoe.

"She has been captured and the canoe capsized. Nothing else can explain this," he said to Martin.

"This is why Finback's boy has been working for you," Martin answered bitterly. "McPherson suspected that something like this might happen. This is their way of getting even with you."

Jared Folkeston nodded, his heart too full for speech. It was unmistakable now, all but their ultimate purpose. In his heart the father knew black fear to which he gave no voice.

Until darkness fell and on through the night the fruitless search continued. The sun was high the following morning when Jared Folkeston, with wan, drawn face, throttled down the outboard motor and steered his skiff alongside Patricia's canoe, in which were now McPherson and Martin.

"I have ordered the boats to spread out and continue through to the other end of the swamp." Nothing of the weariness in his face sounded in the father's voice. "But I still think the clue we need lies not far from here. I am going to the end of this bayou and back again. You men keep close along the edge. We must find the opening my daughter discovered. It's along here, somewhere! She could not have been mistaken, and it leads to another waterway that none of us know. I may find it this time but I count more upon you, because you will move slow and keep close to the cane. If you find anything like an opening signal me."

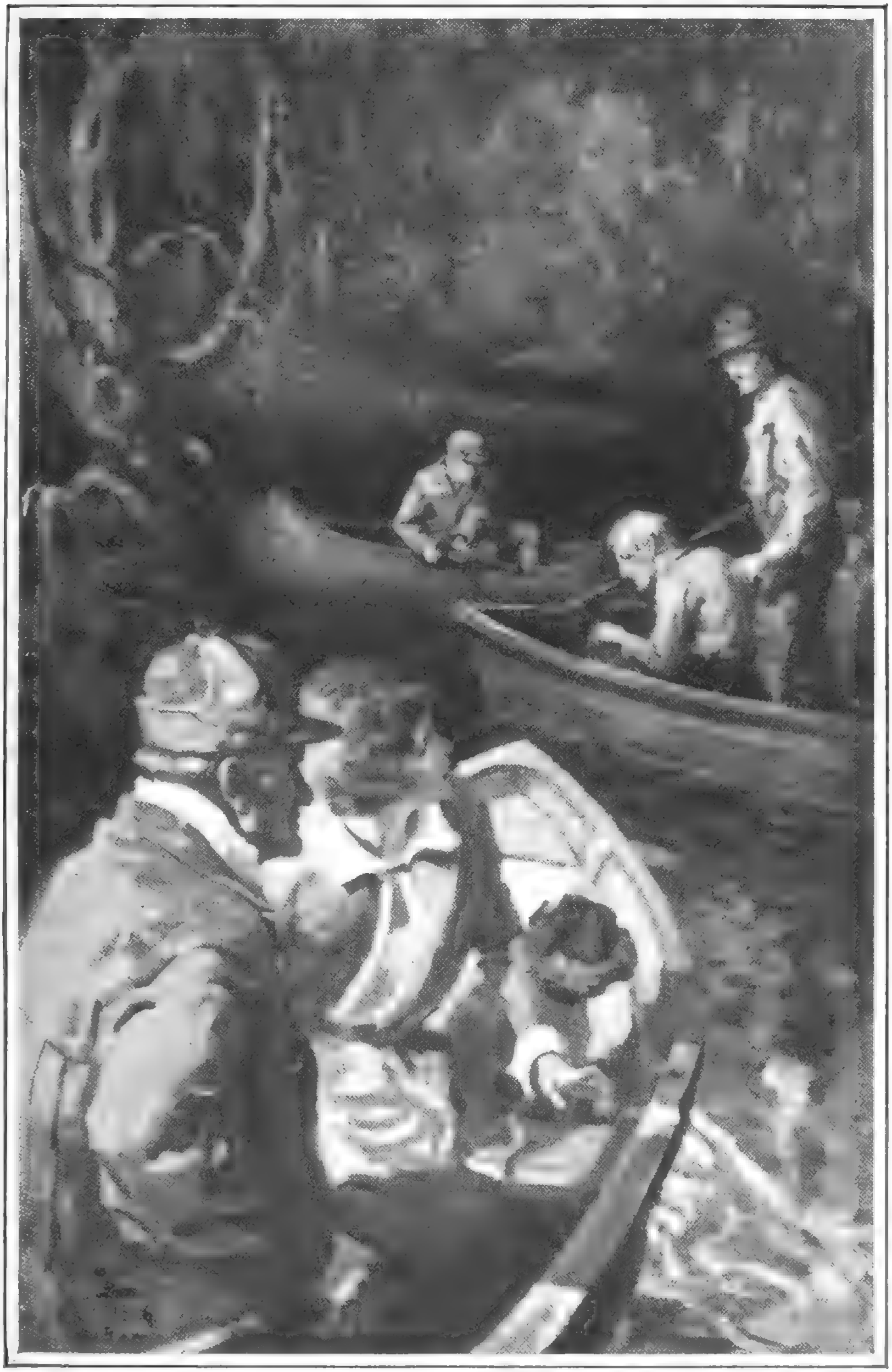
The chug of the outboard motor had faded away in the distance, when McPherson and Martin, creeping along the edge of the reeds, caught a sound that was not of the wild.

McPherson's paddle lifted and the two sat silent and motionless. Again the faint sound reached them, coming from a point deep in the marsh.

"I never knew there was open water back there," McPherson leaned forward to whisper.

Martin nodded, listening intently. Then he pointed.

McPherson dipped his paddle noiselessly



Long Pete read the doubt in Patricia's face and made his strike. "If the lady looks close she will say that she never saw us before."

and the canoe moved on. Directly ahead was what appeared, even at the distance of a canoe's length, as but a notch in the reed wall that hemmed the bayou. But from beyond the notch the sound of voices came to the listening men. McPherson's silent paddle arrested the canoe's slow progress.

Half standing, straining up to see over the mat of reeds without exposing his head above, McPherson searched for some indication of open water, or a swaying of the rushes that would mark its progress if a boat was being forced through the heavy growth.

"It's damn funny," he whispered to Martin as he sank down. "I heard some one back there but I can't see anything."

Martin, his gaze upon the reeds, jerked out his hand in an abrupt gesture.

McPherson turned quickly and saw the reeds swaying. Then, almost within reach of his paddle, the bow of a punt poked out of the heavy growth. The boat was half clear of the reeds when its occupants saw the canoe. And even as they saw it, McPherson's double-barreled gun was covering them.

"Stick up your hands!" he ordered.

Two men were poling, one on either side, at the stern, while a third man sat on a cross seat aft. Motionless with surprise, the three stared at the canoe.

"Stick 'em up!" McPherson repeated. "She's loaded with buckshot and I'd shoot you rats just for fun!"

Three pairs of hands went up.

"We ain't on yo' ground, McPherson!" snarled the man on the front seat.

"I don't give a damn where you are, Finback. You're my meat!"

At the sound of the name Martin's gun, too, came up.

"They're the men we want, Mac!" he cried.

"I reckon so," the gamekeeper answered dryly.

"We ain't done nothin'!" blustered the tallest of the three. "Yo' ain't got no right to stick us up this-a-way."

MARTIN laughed hoarsely. "Blow 'em to hell, Mac, if they stir. I'm going to signal the boss." And at the word Martin raised his gun and fired one barrel and then the other.

"Yo' boss will pay fer this!" threatened the man who had not spoken before.

Martin grinned malevolently as he reloaded his gun.

"All he pays your heirs will collect," he said grimly.

"You men can see the jig's up!" cried McPherson impatiently. "Show some sense and take us to the girl. You'll get off easier."

"We don't know nothin' erbout no gal," snarled Finback.

"That's tough luck for you." Martin's voice was deadly. "If you don't take us to her, we'll sink you three in a quag and forget we saw you."

"I'm for that!" cried McPherson. "Sit down, you two, in the bottom of the punt," he ordered. "And you, Finback, get with 'em!"

Obediently the three huddled down. And so they waited until the chug of the motor sounded far down the bayou.

"We've got Finback and Long Pete, Mr. Folkeston. I don't know the other rat's name," McPherson called as the skiff drew near.

Jared Folkeston turned his haggard face to the huddled three.

"Where is my daughter?"

"We don' know nothin' erbout her," Finback muttered.

"They're sure the right men. They came out there," Martin pointed. "That must be the opening Miss Patricia found, and they've got her back there somewhere."

Jared Folkeston's haggard face took on a grimness it had never worn before. For a long minute his somber eyes fastened on the three.

"You men have just one chance of coming out of this swamp alive," he said slowly. Then he turned swiftly to his men. "Have them pole back through that opening and you two follow in the canoe. If they refuse or make a false move, shoot them. I'll follow."

In this order the three boats pushed through the narrow opening. When the way widened, McPherson paddled forward, holding even with the punt, while Martin, with his gun at full cock, watched every movement of the three. Then Jared Folkeston, in the skiff, drew up on the other side.

"You men pole back to where you left my daughter." His voice was low but filled with unalterable purpose. "I know you are at the bottom of this, Finback. I'm giving you one chance." Without waiting for a reply he opened the throttle and the skiff shot forward. "Keep them moving until you overtake me, or until I return," he called back to the men in the canoe.

IN HER hiding-place, Patricia heard the distant hum of the motor. Quivering with joy, soreness and pain forgotten, she sprang to her feet. She could not be mistaken. She knew that motor; there was no other like it on these waters. Seizing the pole, she strove to force the punt back to the main channel. Back close enough to recognize the occupants of a passing boat, she stopped poling. Caution prompted her to wait, hidden, until she was sure. The sound of the motor grew louder, and then she saw the skiff bearing down upon the bend, and, in the stern, her father.

"Daddy! Daddy!" she screamed.

Above the din of the motor the call reached the father's ears. The roar of the motor ceased and Jared Folkeston got unsteadily to his feet in the rocking boat.

"Here, Daddy!" she cried, both arms thrown high.

Then he saw her.

Again she was struggling with the pole, fighting to reach him.

Seizing a paddle, her father thrust the skiff at the opening and, using the paddle as a pole, forced it through.

With the last remnant of her strength, Patricia caught and drew the skiff alongside the punt's stern, and, turning, stumbled forward, collapsing in her father's arms. She quivered and one weak arm went around his neck as Jared Folkeston pressed the dear head to his shoulder, holding her close. For a long time they remained so, each too filled with thankfulness and content for speech. It was Patricia who spoke first.

"There's the egrets' nest, Daddy." She smiled up wanly.

As he turned his head to look, a great white bird flew heavily through the trees.

Nestling in her father's arms, Patricia told her story.

"My brave girl!" he whispered, bending over to kiss the sunburned face.

"Not me, but Daffy, Daddy." She smiled up at him. "Twice she saved me, and she's horribly hurt."

At the sound of her name, Daffy crowded close. Twisting about, Patricia drew her up and Jared Folkeston's arms closed around them both. And then he told her of the capture of the three men.

"It's certain we have the right ones; but I want you to identify them, Patty dear, and then I'll rush you home to mother."

With Patricia and Daffy aboard, Jared Folkeston worked the skiff back to the channel, abandoning the punt where it lay. As they straightened on their course the other punt and the canoe came in sight.

With blanching face Patricia studied the three in the punt as the skiff bore down upon it. The clothing and forms of two of the men were sickeningly familiar. Patricia had never seen their upper faces and now she strove to see only their chins, their forms and hands. There could be no doubt. Here were the tall and the smaller man. Patricia was certain of her identification until she saw, suddenly, that the third man was a hunchback. Then she grew doubtful. Even in the dim light of the smoky lantern she must have noticed if the third man had been a hunchback. And if this was not the third man, perhaps she was mistaken as to the other two.

In her uncertainty she sought to visualize the third man as he appeared in the blurred glimpses she had caught as he stood before her, as he fought with Daffy, and again in the flickering match-light. True, she had never seen him clearly; but there had been no impression of deformity, while now this deformity stood out as the compelling, dominant feature. She seemed to see nothing else. And as she looked the impression grew to certainty that this was not the third man.

"I don't think those are the men, Daddy," she whispered, while the punt was still a considerable distance away.

"Wait until we get closer. I am confident we have the right ones, Patty," he answered, believing her uncertainty the result of nervousness.

AS FOR the three in the punt, the watchful Martin had noted the start and the quick, involuntary exchange of glances at their first sight of the girl in the returning skiff.

"You don't feel so cocksure now, you rats!" he jeered.

There was no answer from the three.

But as the skiff, moving under the last impetus of the now silent motor, drew close, only Long Pete raised his eyes, and only in Long Pete's heart burned the determination to fight to the last.

"Are these the men, Patty? Look closely and be sure," her father urged. They were close to the punt now.

Then Long Pete, reading the doubt in Patricia's face, guessed shrewdly and made his strike.

"If the lady looks close she will say that she never saw us before."

Patricia started. Neither the voice nor the pronunciation were those of the tall man.

"These are not the men, Daddy," she said dully.

As she spoke Finback raised his head, an evil smile twisting his face.

"I reckon yo' pay fer this, Mr. Folkeston!" he spat out venomously.

The skiff had drawn up, almost touching the punt before it lost headway.

As Finback spoke, Daffy sprang. Without a warning sound the golden-brindle puppy leaped from one of the skiff seats, full upon Finback where he sat in the bottom of the punt. The shock of the puppy's hurtling body drove the man backward; the puppy's teeth locked upon his shoulder.

With a thrust of his paddle, McPherson shot the canoe to the opposite side of the punt, just as Patricia sprang up.

"Those are the men!" she cried. "Daffy knows! You will find the mark of Daffy's teeth upon his leg!"

Coming in October

Besides the new serial "Sea Horses," by Francis Brett Young (see announcement on page 100), there will be—

A Complete Novel

The Grand Duke's Finances
By Frank Heller

Rogues and Royalty meet in breathless encounters when Philip Collin pulls the most daring coup of the decade

Six Short Stories

Lame
By Arthur Mills

Volstock, world vagabond in Argentina, fights a duel and "cripples" a rival in love

Ran Second
By Sam Carson

Another of Carson's inimitable racetrack stories, in which a second fiddle plays solo

Dark Red Roses
By Stacy Aumonier

Artistic temperament finds a novel way of getting even. A love story with a new twist

Fifty Miles from Nowhere
By W. Lee Dickson

A cable station on the Irish coast brings two war-time friends together and leads to an unusual adventure

The Linkster
By Hodge Mathes

A dramatic picture of life among the southern mountaineers

The Pop-Eyed Cow
By Meade Minnigerode

Refreshing fun by a well-known humorist

October *EVERYBODY'S* Out September 15

Postponement

She Lied to Her Dying Husband to Make His Mind Easy—and Then He Did Not Die!

By J. C. Snaith

A WEAK, anxious voice was saying: "You're sure that it's all right this time? I don't think I can stand another postponement. There's been two already."

The woman arranging flowers in a blue and white china bowl on a small table near the bed gave them one last deft touch; and then she turned to the man who lay upon it. "Yes, darling. This time it will be all right." Her gentle voice had a maternal note. She might have been soothing a child. The same deftness which had given beauty to the meager, poorly furnished room now smoothed the pillows and the counterpane.

"Kiss me, Em." The voice was very faint. "Just for luck." The man in the bed felt kind firm lips on his forehead and sighed deeply. "What a one you are! Without you we couldn't have begun to put this thing through." For an instant George Vane gave himself up to an exquisite sense of accomplishment and to the peace which it induced. And then the old torturing doubts returned. "If, after all, it fails—I'd better not have waited for the verdict!"

"It is not going to fail."

He could hardly see the outline of his wife's face, he could hardly see anything, but her courage thrilled him like certain chords of music. Brave woman! It was the thought of leaving her penniless, with two small boys to clothe, to feed, to educate that made the simple act of dying so painfully difficult. Her future, their future all depended on a single cast of the dice. How like her to proclaim in the gallant voice that might not have had a care in the world, that this desperate throw could not fail! But George Vane knew better. Life had burnt a knowledge of failure deep in his heart.

"Doesn't do to be too sure." There came another turn of the screw. "It's not reasonable to expect the luck to change so suddenly now that I'm at the end of my tether."

"It would have changed for you years ago had there been in the world such a thing as justice."

"But there isn't! In this world there is no justice. That's the awful part of it."

A man broken on Fate's wheel was speaking. His torments and his aches were the proof of his words. An artist's slender hand, much wasted by disease, mutely sought the capable fingers of his wife. She was a rock for his weakness, this woman. Wonderful grit was in her, the spirit of never-say-die. She was very near, the hair he loved touched his cheek with a live caress; but all that he could see of her was the twin stars which glowed in the center of her eyes.

"If only we can hit the target on Thursday night I'll be content." It was as if George Vane sought to propitiate Fate. "Doesn't seem much to ask, does it, after what we've been through? Five years of war—and then, on the top of it, five years of hell. Still there are plenty of others in the same boat."

"Not with your talent."

"Yes, with my talent. And bigger. Much bigger. The bottom's out of the theater. It's a luxury trade. And it's in the wrong hands. People of taste don't go near it now."

Again his doubts were coursing him;

coursing him horribly. "My stuff's been too good—too good for the bounders who sit in judgment. That's why, Em, you mustn't think for a moment that Thursday evening is a certainty. You look on this wonderful chance as sent by Heaven. It may be. But as far as we humans go, my experience is that God just laughs in His sleeve."

A frightened look crept into the eyes of Emily Vane. "Hush, darling, hush! Please, please don't say such things."

"No use pretending. War and the theater between them have killed my faith. Weak, I know. But I can't help it. I've never been quite big enough to stand up to life. This one-hell-of-a-muss in which I have had to hustle has always been too much for me. Pretty contemptible. But I see all that now—among the other things." Torn by defeat, he pressed his thin hands to eyes that were almost sightless. Slow tears crept through his fingers.

EMILY VANE, for whom this struggler, baffled and broken, was just a weakly child, gathered him in her arms and soothed him like a mother. He had suffered so much, hypersensitive creature that he was, that her every wish was now merged in the desire that he should suffer no more.

"Dear heart!" she whispered tenderly. "Even Mr. Pybus says the play simply can't fail."

"Can't fail!" It was a dying man clutching at straws. "He says that . . . Pybus himself?"

"Yes—himself. And you know how cautious all theater managers are."

At the note of reassurance in her voice the shuttle gave one twist more in the tormented brain. Could Pybus, the shrewdest manager in London, really have said that? He never seemed to have a failure. The news was incredible. But even the mere production, at long last, of one of Vane's many rejected plays, seemed too good to be true. And for its success to be assured, with his wife and family wholly dependent upon it, just as he was quitting: no, such things did not happen. And yet—if there were any justice in the world! But there was no justice.

He began to sob feebly in his wife's arms.

"There, there, darling!" Cool, slim fingers stroked his forehead. Vane fought hard to control an unmanly weakness, but the will was going.

"Everything is bound to be all right," said his wife's low firm voice. "Mr. Pybus says so. Wait till Thursday evening and you'll see."

MR. E. BERRINGTON PYBUS sat in his private office, at the top of his best theater, in St. Martin's Lane. He was feeling "good." For one thing he was smoking a long cigar, but there were other reasons for a diffusion of the sense of pleasure. This new play was a sure thing. Once again he had spotted a winner. His luck continued right on. Three of his theaters were turning money away from the doors. A fourth was about to find itself in that happy predicament, or you could call P. Berrington Pybus a Dutchman.

Luck, of course, was not quite the word. P. Berrington Pybus complacently fondled the expensive cigar from which particular blend he had drawn many a sound inspiration. No, luck was hardly the word. After all there were such qualities as judgment, savvy, horse-sense, mind-reading power. P. Berrington Pybus had them.

He had them undoubtedly. What a capital cigar! On his way home he would order another hundred. P. Berrington Pybus was likely to die a very rich man. Having once found the knack of making money, you couldn't help it. Yet perfectly simple, if you knew how to get to the back of the sloppy, half-educated, half-baked mind of the . . .

"Yes, Miss Day. What is it?"

The door of the sanctuary, whose thick glass was marked "Private," had opened. A rather dainty little blonde, who moved well and spoke nicely, entered with the air of a young and modest sultana invading the presence of the Caliph Haroun Al Raschid.

"Yes, Miss Day?" The Caliph shifted the capital cigar to the side of his mouth. As one who held the gorgeous East in fee, he sat back in his revolving chair.

"A lady, sir, to see you."

"To see me—a lady?" The Caliph folded his hands over his ample white piqué waistcoat. "Odd. To see me!" He looked incredulous. "Has she an appointment?"

"No, sir—no appointment."

"What name?"

"A Mrs. George Vane."

"Vane. Vane. Mrs. George Vane. Never heard of her. An actress?"

"I should say not."

"Kindly tell her that I only see people here who have obtained an appointment through my business manager."

"Yes, sir, I have told her that. But she says she absolutely must see you."

"Must!" The Caliph turned the cigar over in his mouth. "Must" was a strong word. "A lady?"

Quoth the sultana, after a slight pause: "Not, sir, what you'd call a lady."

A further pause. And then the Caliph: "Well, she'd better write to Mr. Jennings and state her business."

"Very good, sir." Miss Day reopened the door of the private office and modestly withdrew.

Vane! Vane! No, Mr. P. Berrington Pybus had never heard the name. Some girl hunting a billet. But a nerve, mark you, to track him through the vestibule of his best theater, up all those dark stairs, three long flights, to the very threshold of his privacy.

SOON the door opened again. Miss Day returned, looking a trifle anxious. "Yes, Miss Day?" A slight frown perplexed the shrewd features of the potentate.

"She refuses, sir, to go away until she's seen you."

"Refuses!"

"It's a matter of the greatest importance."

"What sort of a matter?"

"Won't say, sir—but she says she simply must see you."

The Caliph looked at his watch. His object was partly to read the time, partly to gain it. Like most successful men he had an objection to being hustled. And there was Miss Day to consider. So far as she was concerned he had no need to worry about his own prestige. But it was wrong of the Mrs. George Vanes of the earth to shatter his peace in that way. However, the rehearsal was not until five. He was at a loose end for the next twenty minutes, although he was only half through a really capital cigar.

"Better see the woman, I suppose." The voice of the Caliph sounded very dubious in the ear of the sultana. "But not, you say, a lady?"

"Not, sir, what you'd call a lady."

There was a firm delicacy about the distinction, which the potentate approved with a sleek smile. "Well, show her in."

A minute later Haroun Al Raschid was confronted by a slight, refined-looking woman of about twenty-eight. But her face was so worn that it was difficult even for an expert in the sex to tell her age with certainty. In some ways it was quite a remarkable face. That is to say, the eyes were remarkable. They were large and yet deep; a curious gray with flecks of blue in them; rather like the sun in January in the Mediterranean. Somewhere P. Berrington Pybus had seen those eyes before. Yet for the life of him, although his memory for such things was singularly good as a rule, he could not, at that moment, say just where.

"Won't you sit down, Mrs.—er—Vane?" The great man indicated a chair augustly, while Miss Day, deftly withdrawing, gently closed the door.

Mrs.—er—Vane sat. "It's so good of you to see me."

Error the first on the part of Miss D. The child, evidently, had something to learn. Even if the clothes of the visitor were distinctly shabby, they were very well put on; and the voice unmistakably was educated. And he had heard it before. Still for the life of him . . .

"Tell me, Mrs.—er—Vane, where have we met?"

But the memory of the great man was not often at fault. Suddenly it leaped to his aid. "Why, yes, of course! I remember you now." Years ago, as stenographer and typist, she had been in his employ. Her name was not the only thing about her that had changed since those far-off days.

The anxious eyes lit with pleasure that after all he was able to remember her.

"Miss Norreys, aren't you? Left me to get married, eh?"

The Caliph's speech was kind. A good-looking girl, she had been, in those days, but rather prim and strait-laced. Since then he had prospered amazingly, and she, quite obviously, had not. A dangerous experiment, marriage. P. Berrington Pybus, whose thoughts in the main were ad hominem, felt a warmth of inward satisfaction that so far he had been astute enough to avoid that snare.

"Well, Miss Norreys—I mean Mrs.—er—er—"

"Vane."

"What can I do for you?"

Emily Vane plunged at once into her amazing story. In certain respects it was the most fantastic P. Berrington Pybus had ever heard. For a man of his astuteness it was peculiarly hard to accept. He was more than half inclined to suspect a trick. Yet, told as this woman told it, with a queer break of a rather wild voice, and in the eyes her entire soul, to imply deliberate bad faith was equally difficult.

"MY HUSBAND is dying," she began. "He enlisted in the first month of the War and he went right through, but it left him a nervous wreck. Ever since he was demobilized he has been incapable of continuous effort. Too much has been taken out of him. Always highly strung and constitutionally delicate, Nature has revenged herself by killing him by inches. He has been bedridden for the last three years. The most terrible part is that, although he could not walk across a room, his mind has remained vigorous and unclouded, throughout.

"To keep it from preying upon him, and to provide for the education of our two boys, he has taken to writing plays. Before the war he had regular work as a journalist. Even at that time he had written several, not one of which was produced. Since his breakdown, he has written or dictated at least half a dozen, but they have not brought in a penny.

"None of the managers to whom we sent them was in the least interested. One or two went so far as to say they were good of their kind, but were not a commercial proposition. That may be so, Mr. Pybus, but my husband is convinced that if only some manager could be induced to give one of them a fair chance at a West End theater with an adequate cast there is no reason why it shouldn't succeed.

"Knowing that his days are numbered, he has worried terribly. Lying in his bed, day after day, half paralyzed and his eyesight nearly gone, it has been a torment of Tantalus. His sole occupation is to listen for the postman in the hope of good news. But the only news we have had has been the return of a manuscript with a curt letter of refusal. And it isn't all managements who trouble to send back the script.

"Day by day, as I say, he has been getting weaker. And the suspense has been torture. He firmly believes his work to be good, and the attitude toward it of the people who run the London theaters has embittered him. Coming on the top of his sufferings in the war, which he has felt more keenly than men less delicately organized, it seems to have destroyed his faith in things.

"About a month ago his doctor, after seeing him, told me privately that George, at most, had a fortnight to live. And then, Mr. Pybus, I did a thing—I did a thing . . ."

There had been several minor breaks in Emily Vane's story. But now there came one more poignant. Her voice fell suddenly away. She pressed her hands to her ashen cheeks.

P. Berrington Pybus was not a man who yielded readily to emotion. But there was a kind of grim fascination in the anguish of this girl whom he had once employed. Patiently he waited for her to go on.

"I did a thing, Mr. Pybus, for which I hope God will forgive me. But I'm not sure that He will. And that is why—and that is why I have come to beg you to help me."

Again the halting voice broke off. The implication that P. Berrington Pybus of all people might have influence in high places left that rather cynical gentleman feeling a little queer.

"What was it you did?" His curiosity had been keenly aroused.

"That evening when the postman brought another refusal and George asked me to read the letter to him, because he could no longer see to read it himself, I couldn't stand this senseless torture any longer. I told him that 'Postponement,' which we both consider his best play, was going to be put in rehearsal at once by you, Mr. Pybus, at this theater. It was a stupid lie, but as he had such a short time to live it seemed quite safe; and it seemed such a kind thing to do.

"The pleasure it gave the poor boy, the relief it brought, the hopes it excited! Even now I'm not sure that silly lie has not justified itself. All in a moment it gave him back his faith in life. And that, of course, was where Nemesis came in. George knew he was dying, but the wonderful news enabled him to fix his will. He made up his mind to live for the first night, so that he might have the verdict before he went. You see, in spite of everything, he believes so in this play. And he so wants our two boys to have a decent education.

"Having something to live for, he has already gone a full fortnight beyond the doctor's estimate. It is wonderful what the mind can do. I've been put to shifts of all kinds to bolster up the original lie. For one thing, I've given the play the ideal cast. How we have discussed it, and what letters I have written to you, Mr. Pybus, at his dictation! And it is owing to Miss Ferris, whom we chose for leading lady, being down with influenza that the first night has been twice postponed.

"The first night, alas, is the difficulty. It is now definitely fixed for next Thursday. I daren't postpone it again. He might suspect. Yet what I am going to do on Friday morning I simply don't know. If he lives till then he is almost bound to realize the truth. And rather than he should do that I'd prefer to die myself. It would be too cruel, too cruel. He has always trusted me. I cannot bear that he should die broken-hearted."

EMILY VANE told her story very simply, yet with real poignancy. Plainly terrified by the trick she had played, she had come in the last resort to her old employer with an appeal for help.

But what could he do? The strange tale and the manner of its telling had touched his heart. It was impossible to doubt that every word was true. Yet so short the time, so desperate the predicament, what could any one do?

"What's the doctor say?" P. Berrington Pybus, above all, was a practical man.

"He thinks I've done a very wrong and wicked thing." The distraught wife covered her eyes. "Of course I never dreamt when I began that it was going to keep him alive—alive in his agony. But the doctor says it's a perilous thing to play with souls. And I suppose it is."

"You bet it is!" P. Berrington Pybus spoke with gruff kindness. It was not pleasant to see this woman suffer.

"The doctor says any sudden shock is likely to kill George. And I am praying now that it will come before Friday, when he is bound to learn the truth, unless—"

"Unless what?"

"A way can be found of keeping up the illusion. But that seems impossible. If only he could die tonight! I can't bear to think of his knowing the truth."

For a moment it seemed as if the overdriven nerves were going to snap. But the voice of P. Berrington Pybus, calm, kindly and firm, kept her together.

"Well, after all, you acted for the best, didn't you?"

"Yes, but the doctor blames me bitterly. He says it's playing with souls. And to be keeping him alive in such awful suspense with mere lies that are bound to recoil—"

Again she covered her eyes.

"There, there, no need to take it too hard." P. Berrington Pybus was fifty-six and a bachelor, but he retained the power, in a crisis, of being decidedly human. Cynic as he was in regard to the world and its affairs, there was something about him that was large and solid and sagacious. "I wouldn't worry too much about that doctor if I were you. He said a fortnight and it's now more than a month. The old fossil can't forgive you for making him look a fool."

"Oh, no! He's quite right. It's a wicked thing to have done. And when George finds out it'll simply be like tearing up his soul by the roots. You see, he's lost his faith in everything. And this'll be the last straw."

P. BERRINGTON PYBUS grew uncomfortable. It was a rum go. A very rum go. He didn't like to see a woman with that look in her eyes. Fine eyes, too. His inspired cigar had gone out. He relit it. Then he proceeded to smoke fiercely.

"Why did you come to me?" he asked, breaking an abrupt pause.

The answer was perfectly direct. "I came to you because in the circumstances you are the only person who can help me."

"I? Help you?"

"To keep up the illusion."

"How can I do that?"

"I thought if by any chance I could persuade you to come and see George and just let him hear your voice saying that everything was all right and that the play was bound to succeed—"

"Yes, but how is that going to help—when there is no play?"

"It may help to tide us over these awful next few days. And if I can only convince him that the play is a winner he will be easy about the boys and his mind at rest."

P. Berrington Pybus thoughtfully turned over his cigar. By nature he was an extremely cautious man, and this scheme, to say the least, was fantastic. Never had his heart been so touched as by this distracted creature whom he had once employed. If he could be of use to her he would be; but that was no reason why a man of plain common sense should venture upon the unpractical. When she had grown a little calmer, he said:

"What did you say was the name of this play?"

"It's called 'Postponement.' "

"Has it been submitted to me?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Funny I don't remember seeing it."

As Mr. P. Berrington Pybus did not see one per cent of the plays submitted to him, it had been "funnier" perhaps if he had remembered.

"There should be a copy here."

"When was it sent?"

"Nearly two years ago. And it has not been returned."

"Odd!"

"It has been applied for several times."

"And not returned. Odd!" An outsize in dissemblers, P. Berrington Pybus. He solemnly wrote the word "Postponement" on his blotting pad. As he did so the clock on the chimneypiece chimed five. He was reminded of his rehearsal.

"Oh, if only I can persuade you to come and see my husband!"

As the great man rose from his chair, it almost looked as if the woman in her distress was going to fall on her knees before him. But he remained quite calm. He felt that he must not commit himself in such a strange affair, but if Mrs. Vane would leave her address he would think matters over. And if he came to the conclusion that there was anything he could do to be really helpful in such a difficult case, why, he would be only too glad! At the same time this must not be taken as a promise. Yet as far as P. Berrington Pybus was concerned the door was not absolutely closed.

The distressed visitor quite understood. It was not a matter to be decided offhand. Only natural that Mr. Pybus should need to think it over. She wrote her address, by request, on a scrap of paper. And then with tremulous thanks she walked with difficulty out of the office of her former employer.

As soon as Emily Vane had passed down the dark stairs the great man summoned his secretary.

"I'm just going to look in at that rehearsal. But I shall be back in an hour. In the meantime I want you to ferret out a play called 'Postponement,' by George Norreys—er—I should say George Vane. We should have it somewhere. I want to take it home with me, so that I can look at it tonight after dinner."

THE next day, about twelve o'clock, a Lanchester, replete with every modern detail, drew up before Number Sixteen, a tiny house in Garrick Crescent. It was probably the smartest turnout ever seen in that modest northwestern suburb, which had no pretensions to fashion.

A ring at the front doorbell caused Emily Vane to glance through the sitting-room window. She was expecting the doctor. But plainly this was not he. The distinguished profile of P. Berrington Pybus, set off with spats, a gardenia and a piqué waistcoat, was visible through the curtains of the side window.

"It is so good of you to come," was her greeting. She ushered the great man into the little sitting-room.

P. Berrington Pybus was an acute observer of things in general. And as he entered he was struck by the fact that this room had hardly anything in it in the way of furniture. There was not even a carpet. It had recently been sold to pay the rent.

"Oh, please sit down!" Emily might have been doing the honors of a drawing-room in Park Lane.

Mr. Pybus sat on the less fragile of the only two chairs that the room contained. "Well, I read the play last night after dinner." He came at once to the horses, in the style of an accomplished man of business. "There's good work in it. But I doubt whether it's on broad enough lines to fill one of my theaters."

"But you do see the beauty and the imagination?"

"Oh, ye-es." As a practical business man P. Berrington Pybus had not much use for beauty and imagination. It was out of other commodities that he had made his money. "But these are dangerous things, you know. In theater-land they generally spell ruin."

With resignation Emily accepted the inevitable. It was no more than she had expected. But since Mr. Pybus had taken the trouble to come all the way to N.W.14, she felt that at all costs he must be bent to the more instant purpose in her mind.

"You will come upstairs and see my husband, won't you?"

It was what P. Berrington Pybus was there for. A situation oddly dramatic had stirred his feelings in a most singular way. He admired enormously the courage of this woman. And the story she had told had somehow appealed to his sense of sportsmanship.

Upstairs, in the front bedroom looking on to the quiet street, lay the author of "Postponement." If appearance meant anything the end was almost a question of hours. Hearing a heavy tread in the room, Vane, who could no longer see, said in his weak voice: "Hullo, doctor! Here you are again."

"No, darling," said his wife. "It isn't the doctor. Mr. Pybus has come to see you."

A flush of joy crossed the emaciated face. George Vane extended a limp hand. "I don't know how to thank you," he said, "for all that you are doing for me and mine. They say miracles don't happen. But to me it is a miracle that such a man as yourself should come to believe in a play like 'Postponement,' just as I am handing in my checks."

THE stark simplicity of the words almost seemed to clutch P. Berrington Pybus by the throat. He coughed a little awkwardly and shifted his weight from the left leg to the right.

"My wife tells me," the weak voice went on, "that you have advanced two hundred pounds on a five-per-cent royalty, even before the contract has been signed. That's very handsome of you, Mr. Pybus. I doubt whether another manager in London would do that, particularly in the case of the first play of an unknown man."

There was a pause. "Oh, but my dear fellow—" It was not often that P. Berrington Pybus was at a loss. But for the life of him he couldn't get beyond those spasmodic and inadequate words.

"Then, too, the cast you are giving it." The voice was hardly more than a whisper, but a strange fervor lent it warmth and quality. "Ideal, Mr. Pybus, is the only word. If that cast can't get away with it, there's none that can. So sorry, by the way, about Miss Ferris. I do hope she'll be all right for tomorrow night. Two postponements already. Perhaps the third time will bring us luck."

P. Berrington Pybus shifted his weight from the right leg to the left. He had the look of a well nourished carp. "You bet it will, old byee." There may have been a slight lack of conviction in the tone, but there was no lack of friendliness.

"The part is so vital. All the time I was writing it Miss Ferris was in my mind. And then Evans, too, as the young soldier man. He'll be great. I said to my wife, 'We can't hope to have Miss Ferris *and* Evans *and* Miss Clay *and* that rare old card Tom Devenish all in the same play.' But she said, 'Ah, you don't know Mr. Pybus when once he sets his hand to the plow.' And she was right. I didn't. You deserve to succeed for your generosity and your pluck. And—and—if I may say it—for your judgment and your insight. For I honestly believe—if you'll forgive me for bucking—that this is a good play."

P. Berrington Pybus felt embarrassed. But he was able to murmur: "So do I, my boy, so do I." And he blew his nose with violence.

"Honestly—you think we shall be all right on Thursday night?" The sightless man raised himself on his elbow in his effort to read the face of London's most successful manager.

"I do." P. Berrington Pybus hoped God would forgive him: but there it was! "Yet, of course, to be candid the literary merit of a play is no guarantee for the box office. In fact, in my experience it's rather the reverse."

"Oh, yes, I know!" There was a quick fall of the anxious voice. "But we mustn't talk of failure. We simply can't afford to think of it. You see there's my wife—and the two boys."

"Quite! But there's no reason to anticipate anything of the kind. With such a cast failure is a shot that isn't on the board."

"You are right. I feel sure you are right." The man in the bed sighed gratefully. "But the theater being the place it is, and the public taste having gone to pot since the War, I shall not feel happy until I know what the newspapers have to say on Friday morning."

The newspapers! There was a queer restriction about the chest of P. Berrington Pybus.

TWO mornings later, the smart Lanchester was seen again in Garrick Crescent. As the great man, with a sublime gesture, opened the wooden gate of Number Sixteen, two small boys came out of the house. They looked very trim and clean and well cared for; and they bore a strong resemblance to their mother, who stood behind them in the doorway. At the sight of the visitor her wan face was lit by a smile of welcome.

"So good of you to come again, Mr. Pybus! How can I thank you?" She spoke with the bright, determined cheerfulness of brave people who are up against it. A little proudly she indicated her nice-looking boys. "This is Michael. And this is John."

Michael and John stood at attention and doffed their hats like little gentlemen. They were awed by the inevitable white spats and the gardenia of the Caliph, and by the magnificence of his Lanchester; but as far as they humanly could they were careful to hide their feelings.

Said their mother: "They are going to the Oval to see Hobbs get his hundred." She might have added, but did not, that a kindly neighbor, a lover of cricket, was paying for this rare treat.

P. Berrington Pybus had been no mean cricketer. In fact, he had played for Cambridge in his day. "Are they, by Gad!" A chord had been touched by those bright alert faces and by the evident devotion of their owners to the king of games. "To the Oval! That's a long way. If they'll wait for me I'll run them down in the car. And I might possibly be able to get them into the pavilion."

It was an epic moment in the lives of John and Michael. To drive in state to the Oval in the car of Haroun Al Raschid; to sit in the pavilion like bona-fide members Their breathless thanks were cut short by the disappearance of the genial Caliph with their mother into the front sitting-room.

"Well, how is the patient?"

"I—I can never thank you enough, Mr. Pybus." Tears of gratitude welled slowly in the eyes of Emily Vane. "It's—it's so sporting of you."

"Not at all. Only too glad if in any way I have been able to help you out." A great spirit, this woman! "By the way, I've turned over that play to Ramsden, my manager. He agrees with me, there may be something in it. Shrewd feller, Ramsden. And funny thing—y'know, that little talk we had, the author and I, the other day, rather got me thinking. Gave one a sort of new light as it were. Ramsden can see Miss Ferris in the part. And so can I. It so happens that she's under contract with me until 1928. That might be one of her big parts. And if we can get the rest of the cast together, as your husband suggested—and I dare say we can—there may be more of a punch in the play than at first sight we suspected. Last night I read the script again. It sort of grows on one. Plays, you know, are funny things. But so is life if it comes to that. At least that's my experience."

That was also the experience of Emily Vane. But at the moment she had neither time nor inclination to discuss it. Her head was full of more cogent things. "I can never thank you enough for your kindness to George. You don't know what you've done for him. Won't you come up and see him again?"

As P. Berrington Pybus entered the meager but spotless front bedroom, a radiance was upon it. The morning was really ideal for Hobbs to get his hundred. A strong pure light was upon everything. And it was reflected in the sightless eyes of George Vane, in which the light that never was on sea or land now shone.

"That my good kind Dr. Robson?"

"No, old man, it's me."

"PYBUS!" A curious glow was in the face, a ring of triumph in the voice. "God bless you, my dear friend!" Nerveless fingers were extended upon the coverlet.

"I wanted Emily to be there last night. But I couldn't persuade her to leave me. And she was quite sure it was going to be all right."

"So was I, old boy, so was I."

"But even you, with all your experience, could hardly expect it to make such a sensation. Yet with that wonderful cast, even a weak play would have pulled through. However, you are going to have your reward."

"Not a doubt of that, dear boy."

"You've seen the papers?" The voice now was a mere husky whisper.

"The papers?" P. Berrington Pybus was out of his depth. For an instant he was off his guard. But with the eyes of the wife fixed upon him in their intensity he pulled himself gallantly together. "Why, of course I've seen them!" he lied robustly.

Said the voice of faint triumph: "My wife's just read them to me."

"Read the papers to you, has she!"

"Yes. And they're unanimous. *Times*, *Morning Post*, *Westminster*, *Mail*—they're unanimous that it's the play of the century."

P. Berrington Pybus glanced in bewilderment at his former secretary. From her his puzzled gaze traveled to a small table near the foot of the bed. A sheaf of newspapers lay upon it. Beside these was a sheaf of hastily scribbled pages. P. Berrington Pybus had need of further support. He was out of his depth again. Once more his gaze was fixed upon the wife. But it was left to the man in the bed to supply the clue. "Funny thing." The voice, still triumphant, was now very low. "A coincidence. But A.B.W. says in the *Times* almost the identical words my wife used last night in this very room."

"What was that, old boy? Damn fine notice all through, I thought."

"Why, he says that without any disparagement of Miss Ferris, whose performance was magnificent, he shall not be content until he has seen the part played by Duse."

"Some words for A.B.W., I must say." Once more P. Barrington Pybus was nearly caught napping. Again he pulled himself powerfully together. "An idea, by Jove! It hadn't occurred to me. Duse, as the wife, might be enormous. I must talk to Ramsden."

There was a further brief pause; and then the firm cool voice of Emily took charge of the situation. "Please don't forget, darling, that the *Morning Post* says it would be gilding the lily to try to better Miss Ferris."

P. Berrington Pybus took up the tale bravely. "Quite right, Mrs. Vane. Those were the words of the *Morning Post*. And the *Westminster*—or was it the *Chronicle?*—said pretty much the same."

Said Emily: "Wasn't it the clever critic of the *Daily News?*"

"They're all clever." A sigh from the bed. "God bless 'em. God bless 'em! They little know what they've done for me and mine. Do you know, Pybus, what you and the press together have made me feel this morning?"

The voice was so far away that P. Berrington Pybus had to bend closer to the pillows. "You've made me feel that, after all, the fight has been worth while. The mud, the blood, the blackguardism, the beastliness—I don't say I could go through it again—but there's a meaning behind it somewhere. When you kept having to postpone the first night because of Miss Ferris—give her my love, God bless her!—I began to think that even this was one more illusion, one more misfire. But as I say, somewhere beyond the beyond, poor old muck-trodden humanity that is always being kicked through the slaughter-house, has a Friend."

"Quite right, old man, quite right." Awe was in the voice of P. Berrington Pybus; but this seemed the thing to say.

"BEND a bit closer, Pybus—dear chap! You'll keep an eye on my girl, won't you? A woman in a million. 'Tisn't until a man's up against it that he begins to realize what a woman is. The way she's stuck it! And then the two boys. I'd have liked Michael—good head, that boy—to go to Cambridge—and Jack to Dartmouth and then into the Navy. But of course all that's out of the question. Still, Pybus, it'll be something to have a man of the world standing behind them to see that they get a square deal."

"Why, of course, old man, of course! And talking of deals, if one gets a really big play going many things become possible."

"I suppose so." The words could hardly

be heard. After its final spurt, the flame had begun to flicker.

"To show you what I mean: Will you believe that before ten o'clock this morning we fixed up a deal with the ticket agencies for twenty thousand pounds?"

There was a sharp intake of breath. "Twenty thous—"

"And mark you, that's before the thing has had time to get really started."

"Twen—thou—"

Suddenly the bed began to rock. Sounds arose of violent choking.

"George!" In an instant his wife had him gathered in maternal arms. "Speak to me. Oh, speak to me!"

Almost before P. Berrington Pybus could rise from the bedside all was over. Never had he seen death at quite such close range. In spite of the clear bright sunlight, a subtle feeling of horror pervaded him. Yet as soon as he had tiptoed out of the room and had closed the door after him reverently, it was succeeded by a stronger, more wholesome emotion. An illogical sense, akin to triumph, took possession of him as he went cautiously down the shabbily carpeted stairs.

Passing through the tiny hall, he opened the gimcrack front door. A rather portly, rather elderly personage in an antiquated top-hat stood upon the step.

"You're the doctor, I expect?"

The wearer of the antiquated top-hat slowly took in the gardenia, the piqué waistcoat, the spats. Then he nodded rather grimly.

"Better get on upstairs, doctor." As the two men passed each other a secret hostility looked out of the doctor's eyes.

However, P. Berrington Pybus was not going to take it lying down. He faced suddenly about. "Excuse my saying so, but our friend Mrs. Vane, in the exceptional circumstances, has been absolutely right. Absolutely right. She's a wonderful woman, take it from me. You gentlemen these days are getting to know a great deal, but there's still a few things left for science to teach you."

MICHAEL and John had made friends already with Sam the chauffeur. They were discussing at great length, yet with earnest politeness that gave salt to a most fascinating inquiry, the respective merits of Hobbs, Hendren and "young" Jack Hearne.

"But you never seen that Australian feller Macartney," quoth Sam, who was a real connoisseur. "Macartney for me every time! Still, as I say, Jack 'Obbs is good enough."

A long moment P. Berrington Pybus stood in agitation and perplexity. And then he came to a bold decision.

"Jack 'Obbs good enough." It was the voice, valiantly genial, of that excellent sportsman, the Caliph Haroun Al Raschid. "Good enough, eh, Jack 'Obbs! I'd say so. Now, my boys, jump in. Won't take long, Sam, will it, to get to the Oval if we make a short cut down West End Lane? Be there in time to eat a good lunch anyway. John can sit in front. And Michael with me. Lucky to have a day like this so early in the season, what?"

Entranced, John and Michael got into the amazing car of the Caliph. They had never seen such a car. And the Caliph himself was quite the most charming man they had ever met. He seemed to have taken a liking to them both.

"Next week-end you must let me run you down to my cottage in the country. And you must persuade your mother to come, too."

That would be splendid. John and Michael leaped at the idea. But there was Daddy. They were afraid their mother would never be able to leave him. And then said Michael, the one with the brains, speaking with shy diffidence: "Did Mr. Pybus think that poor Daddy, if he was well enough, could come too?"

"Why, yes! Certainly he can—if he's well enough." But for all he kept up his voice so bravely P. Berrington Pybus made a sudden dive for his handkerchief.

The dive was vain. All the places about his ample person in which the article was known to lurk were drawn blank. Impatience overtook him. That infernal handkerchief he simply must have. But the grim truth was already upon him that on that morning of all mornings, by some kink of Fate, he had left the damned thing on his dressing table.

What a discovery for the Caliph Haroun Al Raschid to make at such a moment!

The Romance of a Modern Treasure

The Finger *of* Fire

Medieval Torture and Poisoning, Practiced by a Clever Gang of Fanatics on the Trail of a Priceless Treasure, Raise This Tale of the Seashore to a Breathless Pitch

By George Kibbe Turner

Author of "Those Who Dance"

Illustration by Albin Henning

Begin this serial with any instalment. The story up to this point is here.

"YOU hear that?" I asked, and stopped at the hoot of Old Man's Misery. "Even now he would have a long chance to go from here. In two hours' time it will be impossible. He will be captured. So why take any chance of death or torture? Tell him everything he asks." . . .

Two days before, I had met her on the sand dunes, a mysterious figure who asked me to watch for a giant of a man with a red face and another, Nadsky of the pock-marked countenance. The following evening—it hardly seemed possible that it could be this evening—I had passed the girl's house and, hearing agonizing groans, jumped in through the window to discover Mannik, the biggest man I ever saw, torturing her father. At my entrance the red-faced giant fled, and I turned my attention to the girl's father, who had died of exhaustion. The girl had hardly time to tell me of the activities of certain foreigners who, acting as agents for the Great Revolution, had tried to recover from her father the formula of a valuable discovery, when Mannik returned and struck me senseless.

When I recovered, I found myself securely strapped in a chair and Mannik, thinking me a Government agent, threatening to kill me. Before he could carry out his threats, Nadsky, his master, appeared, and reduced him to cringing humility. As we sat there the two talked, the one threatening, the other cringing—as treacherous a pair of scoundrels as I have ever seen.

If we could delay them in their attempt to discover the hidden formula, I felt certain that within two hours the rising storm along the coast would prevent their escape. Already the life-buoy on the reef, Old Man's Misery, was wailing with steady crescendo.

Suddenly Mannik pitched forward in his chair, drugged by some insidious poison that Nadsky had put in his cup. Immediately Nadsky rose and faced Irina.

"You do not think, Miss Vonstrom," he asked, "that I will not have this Formula from you now—at no matter how great cruelty?"

"No," said Irina quietly. "I know there is no cruelty too great for you to use."

"Then you will tell me how to find it?"

"I shall not tell—one word."

"I will help you," I said to that wild man. "If you will leave us alone a moment—"

When he had gone: "Can you keep him two hours?" I asked Irina.

"He could scarcely find it sooner," she whispered back.

"Tell him all, then—everything!" I said. "It will save both you and me. . . . You hear that?" The hoot of Old Man's Misery came oftener and louder still. "In two hours' time he cannot leave the coast."

"YOU have it, I think," said Irina to me. "The little paper?"

And I dug it out from my vest pocket, where I still had it. For now, by our agreement, I had been released, and sat behind Irina by the old stained black walnut dining-room table, where she sat facing Nadsky—all of us now on the same side.

Looking over her shoulder, I saw her smooth out the narrow slip of paper—crumpled, soiled, torn a little now—that had brought in and set loose all the wild greed and anger and murderous determination of these madmen from the ends of the earth, this one night, upon this bleak, God-forsaken waste of sand. I read once more that blind code of words, written in a peculiar little slanting script, with foreign-looking letters:

Studdin' Sails. Great Point. Barnacle. North. Gneiss 2.2.

She smoothed it and passed it on to Nadsky, who stared at it, as if bewitched.

His face changed, hardened, as he saw it. "What is this?" he asked her.

"It is the directions, for my memory, in my father's hand, for the hiding-place of what you seek."

"The Formula?"

"Yes. What he would call always his mental legacy to me. A mental treasure. For he would say always, as you will remember," she said, fastening her dark eyes on him, "that ideas were the only things of really great value in the world today—making stores and mines of gold and precious stones like children's little gilded playthings in comparison."

"Of course," said Nadsky briefly, "as with the telephone, the automobile, the electric light. And this of his even more so!"

"And being of so great value, he would say, it must be made safe by surer means than locks or bars—hidden behind mental barriers, where fools could not break through and steal. 'As has always been done,' he would say, 'in the past, by strong fools who have stolen the best ideas that come from the better brains that find them.' "

"Taken in the past, yes," said Nadsky. "By theft—under capitalism. But no more—under the freedom of the new workers' world."

"Not by theft, no," she answered sharply; "merely the starvation and brutal murder of those who have minds by those who have none."

"Go on," directed Nadsky harshly.

"So then," she said, doing so, "my father—willing this to me, decided upon a form of hiding-place—a place of concealment, which I alone should know. Marked by no mark upon any substance on the earth, but merely upon my memory and my mind, insuring that I alone should have it."

I watched across her shoulder the beady eyes of Nadsky on her.

"What is this then?" he asked her, and pointed to the crumpled slip of paper.

"It is a first reminder," she answered, "for my memory—forced from me by Mannik, through my father's torture."

"If so," asked Nadsky, "where is your father's boasted hiding-place? Why could not I or any one, at any time, force this knowledge from your mind—your memory—as Mannik did—by pain, by torture?"

I didn't like the sound of his dry voice, or the threat in his eyes as he said this. But Irina seemed not to be disturbed at all.

"For several reasons," she said. "First of these, that I have yet no memory or knowledge of the place myself—never having seen it—as he himself planned, foreseeing this."

"But you will know the meaning of this—these words upon the paper!" said Nadsky, his sharp eyes never leaving hers.

"Yes," she told him, the calmness still in her voice, "as you shall later see. But, adding to this, he has arranged what he would call his 'time lock'—for me. That at only very certain times can these marks which protect this hiding-place be seen by me—or by any other."

"What times?" asked Nadsky sharply.

"Never in the day," she said.

"When then?"

"And never, really in the night."

"WHAT is this?" said Nadsky, his voice angry. "Not by day or night? You joke at me."

"But only in the dawn—the changing

from the night to day," she went on calmly. "And then only upon dawn following special conditions, which may for long periods be absent."

"Conditions where?" asked Nadsky, his face darker and darker.

"In the air—the atmosphere," said Irina.

"You jest—you play with danger," said Nadsky in a cold, threatening voice.

"I tell you the mere truth," said Irina Vonstrom, unmoved by it. "As I will show you soon now." And she turned their attention to the piece of paper—that soiled, crumpled strip which lay between them on the bare and ringed and streaked top of the old dinner table.

"First this," she said, and pointed with her long white finger to the few words that I knew about, but could not understand:

Studdin' Sails. Great Point. Barnacle. North.

"What?" asked Nadsky, his thick short soiled forefinger beside hers.

"The marks that guide by night."

"What marks?" he asked, staring at the words.

"These are lights—sea lights."

"Lights!"

"Ask him," said Irina, referring him to me.

"That's it," I said. "They're the names of our lighthouses."

"The odd and ancient names of the surrounding sea lights," said Irina, "as they are known to the mariners and upon sea maps."

"Only," I said, breaking in—for I wanted her always to take no chances to be exactly right in all she told him.

"Only what?" broke in Nadsky, looking up with quick suspicion from underneath his eyebrows.

"Only the first one—that Studdin' Sails—is a lightship," I said, "and not a lighthouse, strictly speaking."

"Go on," he said, his eyes turned back at once from me to her. "The lights for the night! What next? What for the dawn?"

"This," said Irina, and set her finger on that last word before the two figures: "Gneiss. You will know it, perhaps?" she asked Nadsky.

"It is a stone—a form of rock, is it not?" said Nadsky—telling me something that I did not know.

"Yes," said Irina. "And can you tell it then by sight? At night?"

"No. Nor yet by day, either."

"This is why we must go at dawn—if, as now, we would find what we seek, in some place of secrecy, in one visit. For the first four signs—the lights—will lead you there by night alone. Yet it will be by daylight only that will be found, among so many others, the stone beneath which what we desire lies—unless by one with a greater knowledge of geology than I—and a knowledge very rare, I think."

Nadsky's eyes left her face now for parts of seconds only.

"And this," he said, looking down to point at the figures, "these no doubt are the signs you speak of which show only at long periods?" He looked sharply up again.

"No," she said, "those are only minor details of arrangement—as I will show you best when we arrive there."

"THEN what," asked Nadsky, "is this other device—this mental time-lock, which you will say lies upon this strange and fabulous hiding-place?"

His voice was sneering and his look suspicious. I didn't like them. But Irina seemed not concerned by anything apparently, except to tell the truth.

"It is here," she said, and pointed to the word "North"—the last of the four lights named on the paper. "It is only at certain times that the signal from this light will be affected—will properly show."

He came back quickly at her with a question—his voice harder than before. "Not in times of fog, you mean, perhaps," he said.

"No," she told him, "not then—nor from the other lights, as I had forgotten to say first. But not on many other nights as well."

"What other nights?" snapped Nadsky.

"Nights that are too clear. It will not be seen then."

"And tonight?" he asked in a strained, savage voice. "The only night we have?"

"I think so, yes," she answered. "You may make sure, if you wish, by going to the window."

Instead of going he sent me. I looked out into the dark, raising the side of the lowered shade.

"Can you still see it, going over," she asked, "that great white level finger of light?"

It wheeled by me in a minute or so. "Yes," I said.

"We should find it by the dawn, then," said Irina, "—the hiding-place. "Unless, of course, there comes in fog before—or the air becomes too clear by then."

I stood for a minute looking out. For a minute no one spoke behind me. I saw the great light swing by again, and heard the hooting of the buoy come in across the sand and the dark sea. And then I turned back suddenly—for Nadsky was speaking, cold and threatening.

"I warned you," he said to Irina slowly.

She looked back at him surprised. "Hoot!" came the voice of the old buoy in the silence before he went on.

"I warned you," he said again, his eyes set fast on hers. "No pain or cruelty that I can use shall stand between me and what I come to take back from here tonight."

She watched him, as I did—fascinated, waiting.

"Here is the time of times," the Russian called out, in a louder voice. "Here and now. For which whole peoples wait. The fate of mankind. The last battle of flesh and blood against iron and gold! Here and now."

He stopped and waited—after this wild outbreak. "Hoot. Hoot!" came the cry of Old Man's Misery—like something laughing in the dark.

"Here and now!" the Russian said again. "I come to seek what I must have—what all depends upon! Do you think that you can hold it back—hide it by any such poor clumsy lies? No! I will not be put off!"

"The man is crazy," I said to myself, hearing him. "Cracked!"

"I do not lie," Irina broke in.

But he paid no possible attention to her.

"It was for this," he said, in a harsh level voice now, "that the Cheka in Russia and the Zetka in the world were formed—to force the will of the people upon their enemies, who will not otherwise submit. By any weapons that are found effective—by cruelty, death or torture—what difference? So long as in the end the right shall come!"

"Hoot . . . Hoot . . . Hoot!" called the laughing devil out there in the dark when he stopped again.

I looked at him and understood what Irina had said out on the old wreck, how much more dangerous than brutes like Mannik were the others in this Zetka, the ones who really thought that they were fighting in a holy war. That tone, that glitter in his eye, set you thinking of all those wild heathen lunatics and fanatics in the East, that hack themselves with knives and stick sticks into themselves; or run wild and kill every one in their path, like mad dogs.

"NOW you will see," his voice went on threatening Irina, "real cruelty—devices practiced by the Cheka and the Zetka against their opponents, when need is, beside which the Cossack's Cap appears the soothing of a child to sleep. Things especially adapted to you—a woman."

I started now toward him involuntarily. He held me back with his weapon—ordered me to stand still.

"This I will try on you," he said now to Irina. "But first we will clear the way. Step here," he said to me, and brought me nearer with his threatening pistol.

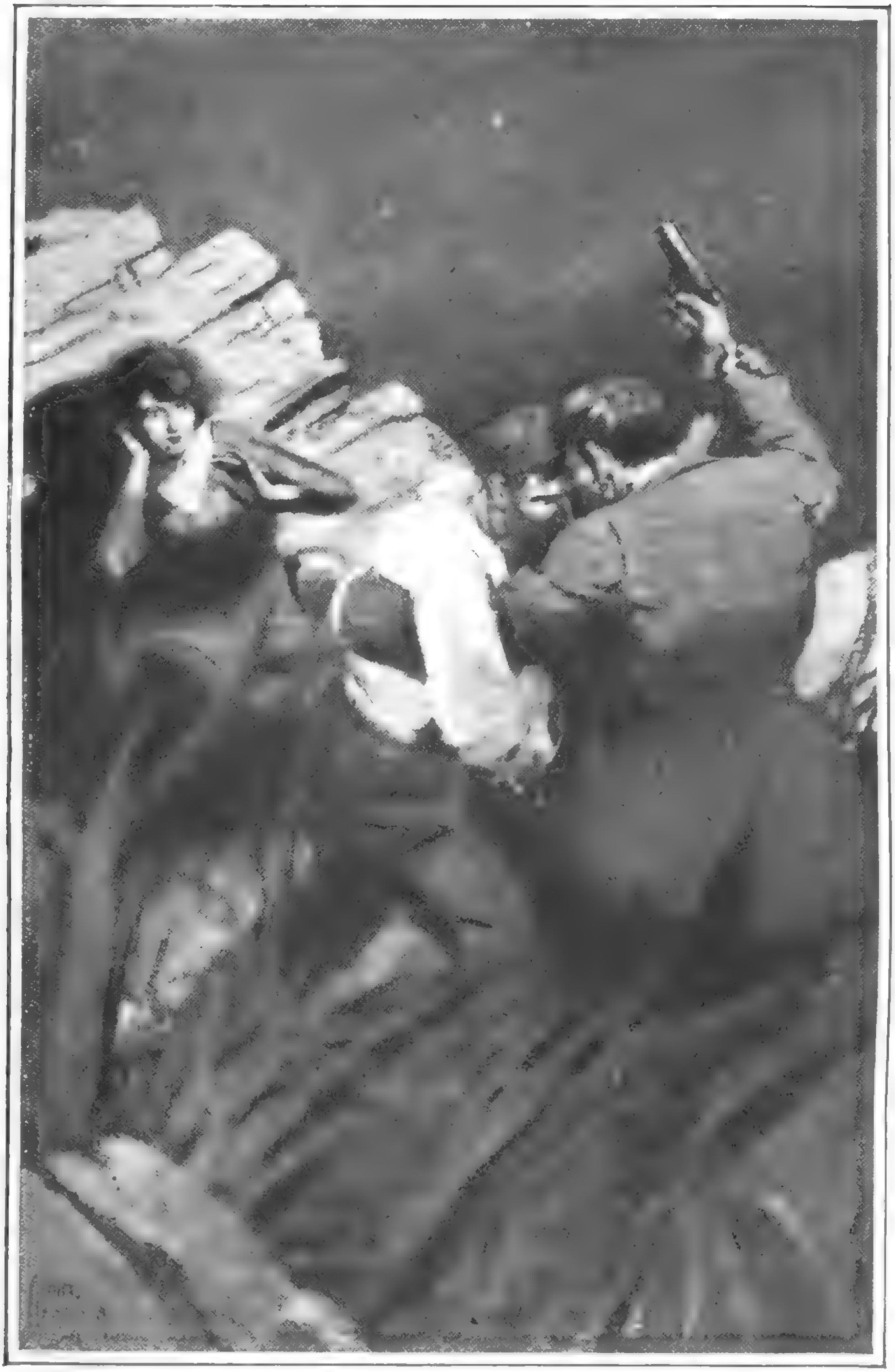
Outside I heard that old fiend calling its call from the sea, which I had just told Irina meant we would be saved—before the outbreak of this madman!

"What is pain, death," he called out, staring now at me, "of one, or a dozen, or a thousand to the millions that have been starved, tortured, killed, broken, and fed by your capitalists to their damned iron men? What is our cruelty compared to theirs? What are the Cheka and the Zetka founded upon but the knowledge, the all too late gained knowledge, that cruelty must be met by sharper cruelty—the cruelty for the masses, for the right? For what else has the Zetka searched the world to make cruelty and suffering a fine art—for the final good of all!"

He was talking and gesturing now like a windmill.

"Do they omit in war anything, if it is the means of victory? To use such means becomes then not a necessity merely, but a duty to the commander, does it not? Only here we save not one army or one nation merely, but a generation and a race. And that is why I take a pride and no touch of shame in what I am about to do—to you!" he said to Irina, and stopped—his pistol always steady upon me.

"Hoot . . . Hoot . . . Hoot!" went Old Man's Misery in his long silence, like the old fiend laughing out of hell. I got ready for a jump, when I had the slightest



With a grip on the hand with the pistol, I had caught him off guard at last and he went down. But he was stronger than I.

chance—to get alive across those few feet to this wild man—this lunatic of a new crazy religion. But he still went on, looking at me and speaking still to Irina.

"First," he told her, "before I come to you, I must now attend to this your accomplice—in your work here, and your lies. For you it will be an object lesson, an urge, perhaps, for you to later tell the truth. For me it will greatly simplify matters by removing one more menace from my path."

And now his arm stiffened as he raised his gun more deliberately at me.

"Wait!" cried Irina Vonstrom. "What would you do?"

"You see for yourself, what I do," the Russian told her. "By shooting him I greatly simplify matters for myself—for all our escapes, which I have endangered by my agreement that possibly, on the delivery of what I wish, this man might go free—with power to notify the Government police that follow us, to destroy us all."

He had lowered his pistol a little as he said this, for the moment.

"Do not move," said Irina to me sharply. "He will not shoot you, unless you do."

I stood as she told me—staring into that pock-marked face, those little gleaming eyes, the eyes of a madman, I did not doubt now—crazy under the excitement of this new religion, this last wild scheme for man's salvation.

"YOU shall see," he was saying, answering Irina. "And more than that, you shall know, and he shall know now, before dying, that it is you, not I, who kill him; you, not I, that shall be his murderess."

"I!" cried Irina. "His murderess!"

"By your lies—your obstinate refusal now to tell the truth about this place of concealment of the Formula of Power."

I had not the slightest doubt now that this madman would carry out his threat. I almost started my leap for him, when suddenly—stumbling across some way I never understood just how—Irina Vonstrom had thrown herself between me and Nadsky, clinging to me, protecting me with her own body.

"I do not lie," she cried. "I tell you all the truth! And never, never shall you kill him—until first you have killed me."

I tried to unloose her arm that clung to me, protected me, refused to be taken away.

"Don't. Don't!" I said. "I'd rather die a hundred times than have you shot."

"And what of me?" she said, struggling, resisting me. "Could I live—if you should die, by my fault? After all you have done for me!"

Gradually I was unloosing her hands.

"O God! God!" she cried. "Can you not see? Are you blind? Why should I live, if you were dead like this?" And she caught again at me.

I started struggling again with her hands—she clinging again to me in the silence.

"Hoot. Hoot. Hoot!" came the jeering cry—like the arch-fiend in the pit—faster and faster and more sharp. And then a new sound—a harsh new voice.

I looked up. It was Nadsky, laughing.

"So then," he said to Irina, as we turned, staring, "it is the truth you tell. And you will guarantee it with your life."

And we saw what it was that he had been doing—play-acting. He had made her, by her action, give him the greatest possible guarantee that what she had told him must be the truth.

"And now," said the Russian briskly, "if you will disengage your arms from one another, we will make plans to go at once—before any weather change shall come, to be there by dawn."

We stood apart in silence; heard once more the hooting coming in from the sea. And as I heard it, the first suspicion—the first real sense of the next great danger that was before us—came to me. It kept gnawing at me all that next hour when we made our plans to go.

It was nearly three o'clock before we started.

WE STEPPED out into the night. Nadsky closed the door in the black house back of us. We stopped, listened, looked about for his enemies. There was no one, no movement, nothing stirring in the enclosure of the staggering picket fence or the sand hollow around it. Nothing in the blackness of the scrub apple tree or the beach-plum bushes. Until, at its appointed time, there swept across the black sky over us the great white beam of the North light. Steady, unhurried, irresistible as the purposes of God, it came with a swiftness that you would not believe, passed and was gone; and left us once more in the unbroken night.

"Hoot. Hoot. Hoot—" as sharp and fast now as the striking of a great clock, came the voice of Old Man's Misery down the northeast wind.

"Let us go," said Nadsky. "There is nothing waiting here." And I picked up Irina to carry her in my arms, as we had agreed.

"Very good," said Nadsky, sneering at us. "You will now have an example of how the world goes today—under Capitalism. You, the worker, bearing the burden—I, the master, holding the power!"

And again that anxiety, that gnawing worry over the last great danger that lay before us, came sharply into my mind over that pistol—that great pistol of Mannik's that he guarded me with—leaving the smaller one, his own, behind. It was well enough for me to say to Irina that the Russian would not escape, hemmed in between his enemies and the deep sea; but so long as he had that weapon—that desperate fanatic—who knew what he might do with it before he would allow himself to be captured?

I started on, with two burdens—one in my arms, the other in my mind.

"Hoot. Hoot. Hoot!" went Old Man's Misery, in our silent progress. The wind was not so very strong—down in that shelter of the Hollow. But it was boiling out there where that chained devil danced and pulled and shouted in the tide.

"Hoot. Hoot. Hoot!" I knew, hearing it, what it was howling—hungry for some fool to come out there and die. And, hearing it, my chief worry quickened. What would this wild Russian know of all that out there, if he could once launch his boat in the comparatively sheltered waters of the Slue? And who could prevent him, as matters stood now, from going himself—and taking Irina with him—to certain death? The thing was never absent from my mind now. Before the dawn came I must get possession of that big pistol of Mannik's.

We went on, Nadsky with his firearm close behind—not even bothered by carrying tools—pick or shovels, as you might have thought. For Irina had told us that these would not be needed, by "the definite planning of my father." So Nadsky traveled light, with nothing to do but keep watch of us—for any others that might appear.

We passed on, as he had decided, through the draw in the sand hills from the Hollow upon the beach. It would be longer that way, but firmer walking on the shore, and more sheltered from sight, if any of the secret service men should happen to be watching, after all.

I heard the louder roaring of the waves, the freshness of the stronger northeast wind. We were out upon the beach.

"Stop," said Irina. "Let me down. You will kill yourself."

And Nadsky told me to rest and wait, while he peered around again. There was nothing. Voices would not have been heard through the steady pounding upon the beach. But there was nothing moving—no small black moving spots against the long stretch of lighter sand, except ourselves. Nothing that lived or seemed to live but the buoy and the light—the voices and signals of the sea; and the faint riding lights of the schooner off the shore.

The weather was not entirely clear. A low dark cloud, touched here and there with gray, ceiled the sky. But underneath this ceiling the night was clear—damp but clear. And through this clearness—across the empty beach and the black vacant sea—came the hard-voiced warning of the buoy; the gleaming of the lights, bright cheerful living creatures in a dead deserted waste.

"COME," said Nadsky, "let us go." And again I picked up Irina to carry her.

Light as she was, it was no easy work. But the burden in my arms was not so heavy as that upon my mind. I trudged on, keeping my strength, following the line between the wet sand and the dry, where the footing is best. Following the beach line, toward the north, we walked and stopped, walked and stopped, going the long but easier way around, and watching our lights, getting our first range.

The place, the back shore by Great Point, lies in general like a great fishhook. Behind us, at the south end of the shank, was the Great North light, lifted up on the last highland before the sand hills began. At the other end of the shank, where the hook began to curve, was the smaller light on Great Point; and out a mile or two beyond, across the channel, the lightship on old Studdin' Sails Shoals. Then the shore crooked around still more to the Bayside, and at the barb of the fishhook stood the still smaller light on Barnacle Point.

Ahead of us as we plodded north upon the beach the white lights shone still and steady on Great Point; and the red and white light on the lightship out of the dim slaty blackness to the right—all glassy-clear in the damp air, like jewels shining through a crystal. From back of us, the shaft of the North light turned—a finger of white fire stretching out beyond us into the unmeasured dark.

"It shows tonight, for our purpose," Irina was saying to me, "better than ever I have seen it."

I only partly heard what she was saying—busy with my great worry. We had come now almost opposite where the Slue runs through—where the shore lies protected by the bars outside. I could see, in spite of the heavier wind, that a boat could still be launched from there; and I could not doubt that this crank, with his one idea, would be little hindered by anything I told him—so long as he could get started out toward Russia with his treasure—and with Irina!

"Come, we must go on," Nadsky was saying once more. "We have none too much time!"

We plodded on, turning now from the beach up through a draw in the sand hills to catch the line of that first range of lights—from the lightship and Great Point. The sand was heavy—the gap between the lights narrowed slowly.

We stopped, went along—I with Irina, the worker with his burden. Behind me that mad crank, on guard with his pistol, peering, watching. But there were no signs of life around us anywhere; no movement but from the distant lights. No sound but my breathing, and the hooting and the grumbling from the sea. For being opposite the Slue, now, the noise of the shore was lower.

"Here we are," I said at last, setting Irina down. We had found our first range. The Great Point light lay solid with the red and white in the lightship. We rested, watching them.

"And now," I said, picking Irina up once more, "we'll try for our other range." And as I said it, the wonder I had first had came to me again; how can you find a range, when you stand yourself between the two range points? It was a new idea to me.

We turned to our left, to walk along our first range line. To our right, ahead, I could see the first of our next two ranges. The nervous flashes of the little lonely bug light upon Barnacle Point jumped and died and jumped and died across the black plain of the Great Marshes. From our left the great finger of the North light swung and went and came again. And now another strange and puzzling thing came up to worry me.

We went on through the sand; ahead of us the woods rose blacker, nearer. And now I thought one part came out nearer, higher than the rest. It was Folger's Woods—the point that runs down toward the sea.

WE STOPPED to rest again, and let Nadsky look around—for signs of his enemies, in those black woods that we were reaching. There was none, as usual. But I was staring now, at something different—looking back, checking up on the range of lights we followed. For I saw now that we certainly were passing to the north of Folger's Woods, with them between us—shutting us away from the flashes of the Great North light.

"Come," said Nadsky, and poked me with the muzzle of that pistol that I must have some way, very soon. And the more so, if by any mistake, by any misunderstanding of Irina's, we should miss the hiding-place—and he should be suddenly disappointed, cheated of his world-saving treasure.

And yet the first range was right. We went on directly along it—passed by the black corner behind Folger's Woods—were no longer in sight of the flashing of the North light. What would happen if after all she was wrong—if this crank with the great pistol back of us should once think he had been tricked—lost his last chance at the recovery of his salvation of mankind?

I spoke finally to Irina. I felt I had to. "What is this?" I asked her, as I picked her up once more. "Have we lost our range—the North light?"

"Look over you," she said, looking upward from my arms.

I looked up—just in time. Over us, as we gazed, the great finger of light from its now unseen source, swung, pointing us on our way. And now I understood this thing the dead man had figured out—the thing I would have not thought possible—the use to which he had put that great finger of the night.

We stopped again, peering into the nearby silence of the woods—Nadsky cautious now, always with that pistol ready, for fear that there might after all be some of his enemies lurking in their black shadows. There was still nothing. We went on.

Our path by the range of lights to sea kept on, as I had thought it would, close by the edge of Folger's Woods—almost in their shadow. We plodded on in just a trifle better walking—a little clay hardening the sand. Over us I watched the great pointer in the sky, which was to show us our final destination.

More and more the thing seemed living, conscious, supernatural; a living purpose that filled the night—while we passed under it, beside these woods, ants at the edge of the grass of a meadow, unseen in the dark—watching till that vast thing should wheel at last and point its huge finger at the little light to the northwest that blinked and blinked—a smaller creature, with a feebler purpose of its own, signaling a nervous answer to the giant thing that ruled the endless night.

We went on, step by heavy step; beside us, to our left, the hush of the deep black woods; behind us the hard hooting of that lonesome devil, that old Man's Misery across the empty sand. And over us wheeled and wheeled again that finger of fire which this dead man had chosen to point out for him this strange prize that they had gathered here from the world's end to fight for—this treasure upon a piece of paper, which this stiff-faced man with his gun behind me, must find for the saving of the nations—if the heavens were not to fall on all of us.

We went on and on, looking up at it. "A pillar of fire by night was not much, compared to this," I said to myself, thinking of the old Israelites tramping the sandy deserts in the dark.

"We must be almost there," I said aloud to Irina. For we were coming now well underneath the great pointer of light, when it crossed the range that we were following.

"Go on. Keep on!" said Nadsky, hurrying me with his pistol—which was getting altogether too prominent now we had come in by the woods and were getting closer to the place where his whole mind and soul were centered.

We went on. We must be almost there. I was growing worried. Suddenly I heard Nadsky call—a sharp whisper.

"Stop!" he said. "What's that?"

We saw, straight on ahead, what he meant. Dim, black shapes, like little men, a group of them, motionless, waiting.

I stood aside with Irina. If it was those secret service men—if there was going to be a fight, it was no place for us—in the range of firing between them before and Nadsky, with his ready gun, behind us.

We stood and stared. "Those are not men," I told him finally. "They're too short."

"Then what are they?"

"Stones!" said Irina. "The place that we come seeking."

We went on, and stood among them: a crowd of boulders—some good-sized, some small—covering perhaps half an acre.

Behind us the white light of Great Point held steadily between the red and white light of Studdin' Sails lightship. Above us the long white bar swung over the black trees, passed over us—and straight beyond us to the place where the little Barnacle Point light blinked and stopped against the black horizon.

We had come at last to the strangely marked hiding-place that the dead man's mind had devised to outwit his ugly enemies. And underneath one of these many stones, lay the treasure for which mankind, in Nadsky's mind, stood waiting—and which might yet cost us all our lives.

We stopped and sat down resting, upon a couple of the smaller boulders.

IT WAS so simple, now you understood it. With not a mark on anything on earth, with a signal to be seen only on certain nights—nights not too thick or not too clear for that bar of light to form in the damp air; with a range which even I, used to ranges all my life, would have said to be impossible, the mind of the dead man had hidden his secret—to be found only through the knowledge he had passed on to the only one that he had planned to have it—to Irina.

"You're worn out, Irina," I said to her, as she sat there by me—thinking of what she had gone through in those last twelve hours—the pain and distress of body and soul, enough to have killed another woman.

"It is you who must be tired out," she answered.

"Don't think it," I said. "I'm good for twice as much."

I was, too. The excitement and uncertainty of the thing was a stimulant that never let me down. And the last problem was still ahead of us—how to get that gun away from Nadsky. Long ago, I had expected to get him off his guard. But not once—particularly since his crafty scheme of occupying me with carrying Irina—had he laid himself open to a possible chance.

He was out now a little ways, examining the edge of the black woods for enemies, with his gun before him—knowing by this time that Irina could not go; and that while she was there, he had me chained beside her. Suddenly an idea came to me.

I whispered it to her—explaining it hurriedly, in single words, watching him as I did so. "If anything happens, if you get the chance—"

I stopped. Nadsky seemed to turn back toward us.

"Clay," I whispered, taking it in my hand, showing her. "This sand and clay—all we can—into the muzzle. If we get the chance. Hush, he's coming."

Her hand closed over mine, to show she understood me. Nadsky came beside us.

"And now to do the rest," he said to Irina.

She looked at him.

"Gneiss. 2.2," he said—quoting from the paper.

"What can you do, before dawn?" she asked.

"Could we not try before?"

"We might—by searching with lights—if you wish to do so. But even then, it would be most unlikely, with all of those!" she said, looking around at the dark scattered boulders.

"We will wait," Nadsky decided, "for the break of dawn."

But she told him, in the meanwhile, the explanation of the last part of the directions upon that crumpled paper. It was as simple as the rest when once you understood it. Great stones are not the commonest thing in our part of the world. Only here and there do you find these few patches of loose boulders, left there by the ice, they say, long centuries ago. And here was this patch, which this man who was dead had found and located with these especial marks that showed it. There somewhere when the dawn came, Irina told us, among those scattered boulders we would find the particular rocks—gneiss, two together, as shown upon the slip of paper, beneath one of which would be found this Formula, this invention we were hunting—enclosed, she said, in a tight copper case.

We sat there listening, waiting for the dawn, upon three of the smaller boulders—Irina and myself near together, Nadsky with his pistol facing us. It grew cold—the damp cold which comes before the dawn, especially in easterly weather.

Irina shivered, went silent. The northeast wind grew stronger, damper; the hoot of the buoy always harder, quicker, nearer. I sat there listening, anxious, understanding as neither of the others could that calling from the sea. To them it was merely a harsh, hoarse, monotonous voice; to me it talked—howled certain death, for any one who ventured out there. If the boat of this Russian was on the bare open beach, there would have been no danger; he could never have launched it. But being, as I was practially certain now it was, by calmer water, sheltered by the Slue, I could not doubt—from what I had seen of the man—that within the hour he would be starting out, charted for Russia, and bound for death three hundred yards away in that crazy water, where the mouth of the Slue came out. And with him, almost certainly, would go Irina—unless in some way I could deprive him of his power to take her—the ownership of that great pistol in his right hand.

DAWN came on; the finger of the Great North light swung through a thinner dark; the Great Point light shone whiter; and in the east came the first dull watery crack of day.

The light grew gray, and as it did so, Nadsky's eyes searched again the woods behind him. There was nothing there still—none of his enemies. But never once did he fail to have his eye upon me when I thought perhaps the time had come that I could jump him—to put that pistol out of action, get him on fairly equal terms.

"It is time," said Nadsky to Irina at last. "You can see now to find this stone of gneiss."

"I will try," said Irina, "what I can do."

There were perhaps a couple of dozen of the larger rocks, scattered about this half-acre or so.

Irina stood up where she was, looked around. "I cannot see from here," she said. I must go about."

I helped her, from one stone to another. She examined one, another, and shook her head. "Not gneiss," she said.

She stopped by a third, and then a fourth—examining them.

"Is that gneiss?" I asked, seeing her face.

"Yes," she answered, "but it is not two together."

We went about carefully—through them all. She still shook her head, growing nervous, I could see. And Nadsky, his pock-marked face stiffer and sterner in the gray light, came always close behind.

"We may have missed it," I said, "among so many. We'll have to make some scheme to show just what we have looked at and what we have not."

We did it—Nadsky following us, more silent and still-faced and threatening than ever; his dream slipping from his fingers. Irina's white face grew whiter and more drawn against her black hair.

"It is here—it must be," she said hurriedly; and I watched Nadsky's darkening face and that pistol, worrying always about what would come, if he were really disappointed, cheated of his hope.

"Now this," said Irina, to herself—going over the thing again, "is gneiss."

She stood by the largest boulder of the lot.

"But you could not move it—to look under it," said Nadsky harshly, "with untold horses."

"Besides," said Irina, "it is not two, it is but one." And Nadsky's face grew always stiffer and more threatening.

"Wait a minute," I said. "Let's look all around it." And I helped Irina to the other side.

"Look," I said. "What's that?"

The big boulder leaning at an angle, and cut under on the same side, made a sort of little cave—toward the northwest, shadowed from the dawn. In this, sheltered, lay a smaller, flatter stone, perhaps two feet and a half long.

"That is it," called Irina. "It must be!"

"Gneiss!" cried Nadsky, new life coming into his face and eyes.

"And the only two together here," answered Irina. And Nadsky stood close, watching, waiting.

I put Irina to one side, getting ready for my final play—to get that gun away from him.

"Come on," I said to him. "Give me a hand at lifting this." And I took up a good big handful of the sandy clay the rocks were set in.

But it didn't work. Excited as he was, the Russian was too crafty. "You try to raise it first," he said.

I had to. Letting loose the sand and dirt, I bent down and took a hold upon the smaller stone.

JUST as I was bending down, I looked and saw a figure working along in the edge of the woods—that I thought must be at last one of those enemies he was looking for—the secret service men.

We were all behind the boulder—he to my right, with the great stone directly between him and that figure lurking, sneaking through the trees. And now my whole idea changed. If I could keep him there, occupied—his mind set upon this thing we were finding, I would give the other man, stealing along there through the woods, a chance to crawl up on him—to get him. I put my head down and kept it down, and tugged at the stone. And as I pulled, it came away, quite easily.

And there, underneath it, in a little copper box or can, lay the thing they were murdering each other for—that Formula of Power which was to turn the world upside down.

It was a small and unimportant thing to look at—to stand staring at as Nadsky stared now—his breath coming fast, the first color that I had yet seen showing in his yellow face.

"Open it," he ordered me.

"I can't," I said. "Not with one hand."

It was like a common round can, with a tight-fitting cover that screwed on it.

"Let me have it," he said; and still holding his pistol in his right hand, wrenched it open before I had a chance at him.

He looked up with his eye upon me again—and I stopped, just as I was going to try once more. He didn't see what I intended to do evidently, for now he looked down again quickly, and took a paper from the can, and stared at it—with gloating eyes and a cry of joy and satisfaction. But I had very little time to notice that. For now—when his mind, his whole soul, you might say, was centered on that thing, I threw myself on him—my full weight, and set my grip upon his right hand which held the pistol.

I had caught him off his guard at last. He went down in the sand—his arm outstretched beside him. But he was stronger than I, I saw at once. I couldn't hold him with my one hand. I looked at Irina.

"Quick," I said, for he was getting away from me. "If you can. Dirt! Clay!"

She was there already, falling forward on her knees, regardless of her injury—pressing clay into the muzzle of the thing, while I still, with all my remaining strength, pushed his right hand flat. He didn't notice it. She worked deliberately, carefully, pushing in the plug of clay.

I would have at least a man's show against him now, to say nothing of the help I knew was coming just back of that great rock. In the meanwhile he was too much for me—for both of us. He tore himself loose and stood now with the gun slipping, slipping from my fingers.

"Don't," I said to him. "Don't try to fire it—whatever you do!"

He said nothing; his breath hissed through his teeth as he put out all his strength to twist it from me. He did so—had it finally.

"Don't fire," I said to him, "for your own sake! She filled it full of clay. If you don't believe it, try it with your little finger."

I saw him do it—realize that I was right.

"And now," I said, "look there—around the rock."

And I stepped to one side to show him.

There, head down, lurching toward us, carrying a great club, was Mannik.

"GOOD God!" I said. "Mannik!"

I saw now what must have happened. That great healthy beast, strong as any three or four men, must have worked out from the first shock of that drug earlier than Nadsky had figured.

The Russian turned with me, leveling his useless pistol at the great figure with the club, and crying out to him to stop.

And now I saw something more. For Mannik still kept coming—not even raising up his head. The Russian called again that he would shoot him. Apparently he did not even hear. He came on, his great club in his hand—some piece of wreckage from the beach—head down, wavering in his walk—more like a gorilla than a man.

"Stop!" cried Nadsky with an oath.

But he still seemed not to hear, not to notice or understand. He came lurching on—not hurrying—not even looking up. He seemed now more like an automaton—or even an animal—something moving in a stupor. And I thought then of that drug—before I heard Nadsky muttering, cursing.

"What?" I whispered quickly.

"The Indian drug," he whispered back. "It will act that way at times, upon the nerve centers—making them like sleep walkers."

And he shouted out again: "Stop. Stop. Or I shoot!"

But still the other man came on, clearly not taking in what was said—an automaton, without fear, without senses, moved only by the lowest ugly instincts that had made the main motives of his life—carried on perhaps by the last thing that was in his mind before that drug struck him down—his hate and his appetite for revenge against Nadsky. Driven by it, reduced to the last, worst, ugliest appetites, a hunting beast, without memory or mercy or fear, he kept on his unhurried way, straight toward us.

I looked at him and at Nadsky's useless pistol, and I jumped toward Irina. For us two men, it would not be so bad; we might perhaps keep out of his way. But what of Irina, sitting there helpless, watching? How could it be possible to get her away from that hunting monster?

As I jumped toward her, I heard the voice of Irina herself call out in a piercing whisper:

"Comrade, Comrade Mannik! The police!"

He wavered—seemed to hear for the first time.

"Look! Stop!" Irina whispered. "The police! The American police."

He stood listening. Another strong emotion had come back to him: fear—the fear of months, of years; the fear that had always followed him—of capture, by the law!

He looked up—and into Nadsky's pistol!

"Stand!" said Nadsky loudly. "Or you die."

He stood—as docile as an ox.

"Drop that!" said Nadsky.

The piece of oak wreckage dropped from his hand.

He stood, a new light in his eyes—the light, the intelligence of fear. But very little else.

"He will come from now on," said Nadsky—knowing something, perhaps, of the action of the drug the man had taken; but perfectly sure anyhow. "For now he has again his fear of death."

Then after a very little time I could see that he was right. Fear was back again in Mannik, not less but more than usual, the one chief thing that moved his mind; and with it, from then on, Nadsky could lead him by a halter. I came close to Nadsky.

"Shall we start now?" I asked him.

"Where?" he whispered back.

"And take him back there," I said, pointing over Folger's Woods, toward the village, "to the secret service men?"

He stood looking at Mannik without answering or turning toward me.

"Or shall I explain to that thing about that?" I said, looking from Mannik to his pistol. And I saw the shadow of a crafty smile upon his pock-marked face.

"What?" said Nadsky. "Turn him loose—on her—as he is now!"

We stood, side by side, whispering, controlling both our faces and our voices, so as to give no clue in any way to that waiting brute that would break the control, the spell of fear by which we held him.

Then I touched the arm of Nadsky, for I saw now that I must try to show him where he really stood.

"YOU hear that," I said, "that hooting of that buoy—that thing going all the night—faster and faster."

We listened to that high, harsh, short call of Old Man's Misery, come over the sand hills, through the light of the watery dawn. "Do you know what that means?" I asked the Russian.

"What does it?"

"Death to the man that goes out there now—in any craft—no matter what. For the larger would go aground, and the smaller would live about five seconds."

Nadsky smiled again, his eyes still on his prisoner—Mannik—still standing like a graven image in his tracks.

"And do you think you can fool me so?" asked Nadsky.

Everybody's Magazine, September, 1924

"Come down," I said. "I'll show you. I'll prove it. We'll leave her here," I whispered. "We won't both be any too much for him if he should happen to start loose again."

"Very good," said Nadsky finally. "Let us go—why not?—to where I leave my boat. You can show me from there."

And my heart gave a jump. For now, the farther off we took this brute, the safer Irina would be if he ever broke away from us. It jumped again, when Nadsky went on.

"Let us compromise," he said, in that low, even voice in which we were both now talking. "We have now—what we came for," he said, and touched where lay in his inside coat pocket that world-saving paper—that Formula of Power he had taken from its copper box. "Suppose now that I take him and go. And you retain your friend—the lady for whom you fight so valiantly this night."

"Come on," I said. "Now."

We started, leaving Irina, driving Mannik on ahead, like a worn-out horse, at the point of Nadsky's pistol.

The sunrise was almost come, promising a gray, dismal day. The lights were whitening in the strengthening daylight. The beam of the Great North light still swung by us overhead, but going fast, the ghost of what it was. The outlines of the sand hills were growing clearer; beyond them we saw the grayness of the water of the Slue.

We were heading there—as I thought we would—the only moving thing that we could see, except for the fading lights, the first inhabitants of the day coming to this bare, empty waste. We reached the Slue; stood by where he had drawn up his boat, Nadsky's prisoner before us.

"You see," said Nadsky smiling, looking out upon the quiet water, "how still it is here; with how little difficulty now I shall reach the ship."

Looking southward with him, to our right, I saw again the outlines of that Zetka's schooner—small and dark—across the steel-gray water.

"And then away, to safety! With this!" the Russian said, his voice rising, his left hand touching the pocket where lay his paper treasure—his priceless Formula of Power.

I didn't answer at once. For I was staring at that boat of his, hauled up on the sand—that poor little old-time round-bottomed ship's tender—about as seaworthy as a wooden chopping bowl.

My heart went back on me. I couldn't let anything alive go out into that churn—where that old buoy was plunging and dripping and shouting murder beyond the mouth of the Slue.

"You're going?" I said. "You're determined to go?"

"Why?" asked Nadsky, his small eyes on me.

"You hear that out there?" I said. "Nothing afloat could live there—when you got out there where that is howling at the mouth of the Slue."

"I thought," said Nadsky, in a dry voice, "that it was our bargain that you help me go."

"All right," I said. "Only I can't have you go without saying that much."

"DO YOU think I would not go—now?" asked Nadsky. "Take the chance, even if what you said was true? Take any chance whatever now of going on to Russia—with what I have now finally secured?"

That light came back, that glitter of a crank's eagerness to his eyes.

"I've warned you, anyhow," I said.

"You've warned me, yes. Or you have lied—which, I do not know. But now help me—as we have agreed."

So I helped Mannik now pull down the little ship's tender to the water, under the aim of the Russian's gun. You couldn't help harboring a secret sneaking admiration for him. He had the courage of his convictions, no matter how wild they might be. He would face death for them, without a twitch.

We put Mannik in the thwarts and gave him the oars. I got Nadsky into the stern, where he was to do the steering, and keep the other man in order, at his work. They were about as handy with a rowboat as a cow with a musket.

"Keep in," I told him, "under the bar. Then when you get there at the opening, put her head on. Let her have it!" And then I pushed him clear.

I doubt if either of them understood it.

"Row!" said Nadsky to Mannik, raising his pistol just a trifle toward him—and they got under way. The great murderer was scared—more every minute the sense of the danger he was in struck him, with a sudden panic—as it will dumb animals sometimes, headed for the slaughter. Big tears had come into his eyes while I was shoving them out—from sheer fright. But terrified as he was at what was coming, he was still more terrified of the man before him—the pock-marked face of the man in the stern, who held him cowed, driving him to his own death with that useless weapon.

I went back, stood there upon the beach, and watched them go. He was blubbering now, that great coward, like a child; but meanwhile he went rowing on and on to his certain death, just the same.

I wake now, sometimes, and see them in the night—and always shall. That great blubbering murderer, blundering out with his awkward oars, nearer and nearer the mouth of the Slue; that stern-faced crank who sat facing him in the stern, the useless pistol threatening in his right hand; the precious paper that was to save mankind in his inner pocket.

I watched them crawling, crawling through the gray half-light out toward the channel, and the hooting of Old Man's Misery.

Suddenly they struck the wild water out at the mouth of the old Slue. The little rowboat rose, the crazy oars beat the air—they whirled—clung—swayed—went over! And in a few minutes more the two black spots had bobbed and gone; the round dark bottom of the ship's tender had heaved and tossed, and heaved and tossed—and disappeared, out on the fast tide. And straining eyes and ears, I saw no more but the dim confusion of gray and white, heard nothing but the distant surf and the happy, hungry hooting of the buoy.

I LOOKED to the south, toward the schooner. They were hoisting sails to go—Nadsky or no Nadsky, scared to wait longer, as we found out later. They were hurrying to save themselves without him—without their precious Formula.

I turned then and hurried, thinking of Irina, and what she might be wondering—waiting alone back there, seeing nothing, feeding her imagination with fears.

She was standing, supported by that great boulder of gneiss. She held out her arms to me—half hysterical—crying out:

"You come. You come! You are not dead!"

And I caught her in my arms as she started swaying toward me. I caught her, held her—closer and closer.

"This—this must not be," she said, after a minute or so—and started drawing away.

"Why not?" I said sharply—rebellious at letting her go.

"No. No!" she said. "When only one night we have known one another!" And finally she freed herself.

We stood apart—silent—I stepping back, and she supporting herself again by the high boulder of gneiss.

"Look, what I have!" she said, breaking the silence—and reached back and brought down something which stood upon a flat place upon the top. She held up in her hand a copper can.

"What?" I asked her—thinking it was the one which Nadsky had taken and emptied and thrown down.

"It is not what you think," she told me. "Not that!" And she pointed back of me. Looking around, I saw the two parts of the copper can that we had found still lying there, where Nadsky had dropped them.

"Then—then what is that?" I cried.

"It is my father's invention—the real Formula."

"The Formula!" I said. "That's at the bottom of the sea."

"No, it is here," said Irina, smiling a tired smile. "Recall your directions—the full directions upon my father's slip of paper."

And I did so—repeating it finally for her—Studdin' Sails. Great Point. Barnacle. North. Gneiss 2.2.

"You see?" she said.

"No."

"The first four, they are the sea lights."

"Yes."

"The gneiss—that is this!" she said, touching the great boulder.

"The first figure 2—that is this," she said, looking down—at the overturned smaller stone.

"Yes."

"But what of the second figure 2?"

I said nothing.

"Which up to now, all have overlooked."

I stood gaping.

"This is it—the second 2," she said, holding out the second copper box, "that I have taken out since you went—from underneath. The real Formula, which the fine mind of my father would hide still further from his enemies—if they should come upon this hiding-place by any chance. For then they would rush off, he foresaw, taking with them the first, false Formula, which would not act effectively—leaving the other—the true one—for me."

"THEN that thing they went out there to drown with," I said, "was useless!"

She nodded, her great honest eyes on mine.

"As that pistol," I said, "of Nadsky's!"

She nodded, but did not speak. And again I saw her sway. What she had gone through had been too much for her.

"If I hadn't been a fool," I said to her, "I would have realized it."

"No," she said, standing back against the great stone. "No. I can still keep up."

"Come!" I said, and held out my arms.

"What?" said Irina, pressing back against the boulder.

"I am going to get you over to the village, the quickest way I can," I said.

"No," she said, still shrinking back. "I cannot."

And I was hit, sensitive again—my mind back on that same old thing, thinking of my lost hand.

"I'm sorry," I said, "that you feel that way."

"Oh, no! It is not—not anything of you," said Irina Vonstrom. "Never!"

"What is it, then?" I said harshly—and then looked over at her, surprised. Her eyes were wide, and there was color in her face; she shrank back against the boulder as if she feared me.

"What is it?" I asked again.

"You must not feel that—ever—that I would not—not like you—trust you!" She said, and stopped, her hand on my arm—unable, it seemed, to go on.

"What is it, then?" I said—no longer sensitive, angry, but surprised and wondering—at her face, her eyes, the way she kept away from me—as if she suddenly was afraid.

"Come!" I said, holding out my arms again.

"No."

"But why—what is it? Come!"

"No," she said, shrinking back. "No. I cannot—could not—now!"

"Cannot! Could not now!" I said, still staring like a fool.

"When—when I am so—so thankful—that you are safe!"

I stepped toward her, took her arm—looked into her eyes.

"Why?" I asked her. "Why?"

She held her eyes away.

"Why?"

"Lest—lest you should think shame of me," she said finally, in a lower and lower voice.

I caught it now—and caught fire.

"Shame!" I said. "For what? That I am mad—crazy—that I could go on carrying you—to the ends of the world. That I—" I said—and caught myself, coming a little to my senses.

"No," she was saying slowly, after a wait, in that soft pretty bookish talk of hers. "But lest I myself, perhaps—show you also—about myself now—if in your arms."

"Let's see," I said—and caught her.

"But—but," said Irina, still resisting, "how—how shall you know—be sure—after one night only that we know each other?"

"One night!" I said. "No. We've known each other—forever. I believe it—as much as I believe in God. Somewhere—some place—in some existence—on some other star—we must have—must have known each other."

"Do you feel that also?" asked Irina Vonstrom, raising her wonderful great eyes to mine.

WE WENT—I carried her to the village; notified the head of that gang of supposed telephone linemen—forgetting almost to take with us, when we went, that copper box that had fallen beside us on the ground!

But when it came out, after the trial—that Government trial you have seen in the papers, of those men, the members of that Zetka society they captured in that schooner—when I saw just how valuable that Formula really was, what it was going to mean eventually to Irina, there was another face on the matter. I had to go to her—in that great hotel, where they had her stopping in the city.

"I can't, I can't, Irina," I told her. "You were worn out—broken—by that night—your father! I can't take advantage—this way."

She stood watching me, with those deep, solemn eyes of hers—her thin, delicate white face, her great black crown of hair—more beautiful, more rare, more foreign than ever.

"And leave me a stranger," she said, with a faint reproachful smile, "among all these strangers—with no one I can surely trust."

"Could you trust me," I said, "if I took advantage now of that time I helped you—of your feelings then—when I was there, by chance, to help you in your trouble?"

"You feel so, then?" asked Irina Vonstrom sadly.

"I do, yes," I said, growing cold all over me, thinking it was all through.

She stepped a little toward me—in her expensive clothes, across the fine, expensively furnished room.

"Then must I," she said, in that pretty foreign speech of hers, "take advantage of you. Close your eyes," she said, "while I shall test you."

"Test me!" I said after her, shutting them.

"Yes, while I give you a new, scientifically made test of suitability for husbands." And she put her cool white fingers on my eyes. "But you must tell me truly what you see," she added.

"I will," I said, waiting, the blood coming back into my finger-tips again—seeing how things were going.

"What, then, is it that you most clearly see—of all the things you know—when thus your eyes are closed? Truly—really."

And after a minute I told her—made probably the longest speech of my whole life.

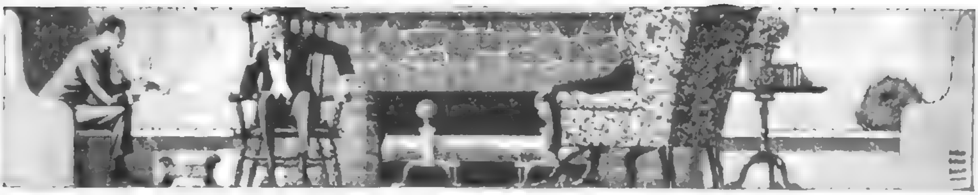
"I see," I said, "a twilight—over the wide faint yellow stretch of sand—over the ocean growing gray. I hear the slow waves grumbling on the beach. I smell the faint clean resinous sweetness of bayberries."

"Yes," said Irina Vonstrom's voice softly. And her fingers trembled on my eyes. "Yes."

"And I see against the faint flushed sky out eastward, the loveliest woman in the world—that I have never seen before—that I have waited for forever—come to me from far, far away—out of a far country. Rare, lovely, mysterious, and never really known—as a woman always must be to the man who loves her. And over her, in the fragrant dusk, goes swinging on and on the long white finger of the Great North light."

"How then could I ever let you go?" said my Irina softly.

THE END



Everybody's Chimney Corner

Where Reader, Author and Editor Gather to Talk Things Over

THERE is a zest in living if one really enters into the spirit of the thing. In speaking of the joy that comes with living intensely Mabel Dunham Thayer ("It Can't Be Done," page 9) says:

> Most of the folks in the story you know. And if you know them you love them as much as I do. They live all over the country from Maine to California, happy young folks—and young old-folks—who are always ready for a lark. Of course I've picked some of them that I know best. And I've laid the scene in New York, where anything may happen, because I know New York best. I ought to know it. I came down from Massachusetts to lick it some years ago. It was nip and tuck between us for quite a while, but I've got my foot on its neck—for the moment, anyway. I love New York. I love its noise, its dirty streets, its city smells. Under its roar I always feel its heartbeat, big and strong. I still feel the thrill from the lights of Broadway. For me, spring begins when the hurdy-gurdies play. Up in Massachusetts I learned out of books. Things were easy—and monotonous—with the family always ready to decide everything for one. But down here I've learned life. I've learned the taste of hunger and the kinship of loneliness. It's a great thing to learn, for it makes joy very sweet and laughter priceless. There's only one failure in this whole big city. It's the chap who really thinks "it can't be done!"

FROM time to time, in the various magazines of this country and England, there have appeared corking good stories under the name S. Carleton ("Crusts," page 59). Few readers who have felt the strong sweep of adventure, colored by unusual romance, that has permeated these stories have known that S. Carleton is a woman who has seen the wilderness of Canadian forests, the battle-fields of France, and the zestful spirit of Monte Carlo where "Crusts" is laid. A woman who writes with extreme facility, she is extremely reticent in coming to the Chimney Corner with much about herself, since she believes her stories should stand on their own merits. Of herself, she says with a touch of whimsicality:

> I was looking in a shop window, coveting a hat, and I saw another woman behind me. "That's an ugly woman, but she has an awfully nice expression," I thought, and then I saw the looking-glass at right angles in the window, and it was *me!*
>
> Don't you think the past is a dull thing (she continues) unless it is really joyfully scandalous—I mean to other people? Mine is in Canada, where I love the woods, and in Monte Carlo and Italy in the winter and London for the summer for the last two years—where I meet as many interesting American people as I ever did on my side of the sea.

Norman Reilly Raine, author of "And David Took Thence a Stone."

IF ONE were to step on to the magic carpet made famous in the Arabian Nights and visit the far corners of the world, there could be nothing to outdazzle the record of Norman Reilly Raine ("And David Took Thence a Stone," page 39). He writes:

> I was born in Wilkes-Barre on the same day on which Edward, the Prince of Wales, was born in England, from which point our mutual interests diverge. The acquirement of knowledge was interrupted, or supplemented, perhaps, by several trips to the Old World between the

From left to right, S. Carleton (see the new serial, "Crusts," page 59), Mabel Dunham Thayer ("It Can't Be Done," page 9), and Michael J. Phillips ("A Runner-up for Providence," page 85).

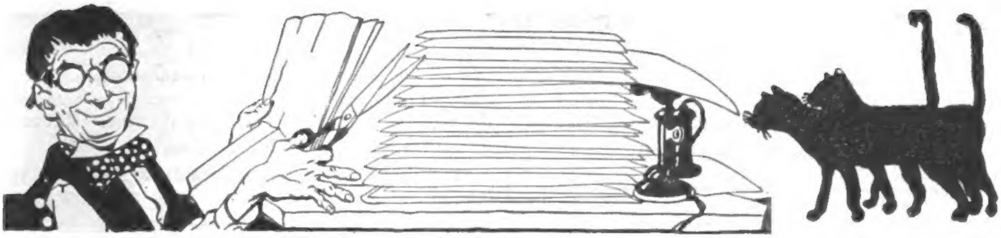
ages of one and twelve years, to which early depravity I owe my present love of roaming. Educated in the United States and England. The years immediately preceding 1914 found me a newspaper reporter on Buffalo papers until the Big Story broke in August and I donned a Canadian uniform. Was given a commission on the field and walked the chalkline of elemental emotions for nearly five hectic years, during actions at Ypres, the Somme, Vimy Ridge, Passchendaele, Amiens, Arras and subsidiary engagements. After demobilization at Toronto in March, 1919, the seed of my youthful voyagings came into active germination and bore successful fruit, for since that time I have covered most of the globe.

THERE should be more classes at commencement time with the motto: "I'll try anything once." And more people should pray: "O Lord, preserve in me an adventurous spirit." These are a part of the creed that has been practiced with unusual success by Michael J. Phillips ("A Runner-up for Providence," page 85).

While in Canada, the Department of Militia and Defense there invited him to put on outdoor moving-picture shows in the twenty-five militia camps during the summer. Mr. Phillips's heart came into his throat when the magnitude of the work was explained to him. He had never heard of a moving-picture show out of doors, knew nothing about projecting machines or electricity, and had no idea where he might get films, operators, machines, and a hundred other things needed. He gulped down the obstruction in his throat, went back to his hotel room in Ottawa, and began figuring. But first he replied to the Department Minister, Lieutenant-Colonel Hughes: "I'll try anything once!" So successful was his work in the herculean project that two years later he was made director of a military film involving the use of three thousand troops in play, work, and maneuvers. He was in Cuba with Shafter's army as a private in '98, lieutenant and aide to a brigade commander during the trouble with Mexico in 1916, and captain in the Air Service during the World War. Since that time he has turned his attention to fiction.

IN THE February issue of EVERYBODY'S there appeared the first of a series of racing stories by Sam Carson which has aroused no little comment in the sporting world. It is gratifying to know that these vivid snapshots of the racetrack appeal to enthusiasts in the sport as well as to the general public, for it indicates the author's skill in transcribing life. A recent issue of the *Daily Racing Form*, a publication devoted to the track, says in part:

> While one of the so-called "million-dollar" movie thrillers is flaunting a false and vicious picture of the turf before the American public, it is encouraging to find a reputable magazine like EVERYBODY'S opening its columns to a healthier and truer form of racing fiction. In the February issue of this publication begins a series of racing stories by Sam Carson. The first of the series is a good story, which is the important thing from the standpoint of the magazine publisher, perhaps; but more important, so far as the turf is concerned, it is a more truthful picture of racing than has been given to the American public for a number of years. Mr. Carson appears to know his subject, and the magazine is to be congratulated on thus taking the lead in giving to the general public a truthful picture of racing as it is. Racing can well afford to be treated truthfully in fiction—it has seldom been handled veraciously in the past.



Prose *and* Worse, *by* Gridley Adams

DO YOU BELIEVE IN SIGNS?

In New Orleans: "*Squeeze-Ezy Mop Company, Toulouse St.*"
Author of "Wild Flower Families": "*Clarence Weed.*"
On refreshment booth in Mayfield, Ky.: "*Eat Here and Help the Cemetery.*"
In Bird Center, Kans.: "*Hawk & Sons, Garage Props.*"
In Columbus, Ohio: "*Turney Keyes.*"
In Central City, Iowa: "*Hatch-Fish Company, Ford Garage.*"
At 4638 Broadway, Chicago: "*Kosher Delicatessen, Moses Bacon, Prop.*"
In Milwaukee: "*A. L. Schroth, Undertaker and Dealer in Underground Novelties.*"

(*Lake Worth, Fla., Herald*)

After lunch the dishes were cleared away and for an hour sang songs and made merry in a general way.

Don't you just love the clatter of the platters and the chiming of the soup tureen?

(*Jacksonville Metropolis*)

Mrs. L. E. Williams has returned from Mulberry, where she has been visiting her husband. She was perfectly satisfied with her trip.

Yes, Florida *is* a wonderful country.

(*Sign in Hartford, Conn., grocery*)

"Belchertown Eggs. Cannot Be Beat." (L. S.)

Guess I'll just hafter hab'm boiled.

(*And in another Hartford grocery*)

"Canton Centre Eggs."

What's the matter with the hens, nowadays, *anyway?*

(*Boston Traveler*)

MILLBURY, Oct. 17—Congratulatory showers have been tendered two popular young women in town, Misses Edith Pierce, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William L. Pierce, and Gertrude A. Paradis, daughter of Mrs. Joseph Paradis, who are soon to become the brides of Leverett Bailey, son of Mr. and Mrs. J. L. Bailey. (MRS. E. M. G.)

It never rains, but it pours.

(*Mason City, Iowa, Globe-Gazette*)

County Superintendent Boggs returned from Rochester Saturday, where he underwent an operation. The experts there said his illness came from a nervous affliction and that he had no need of an operation.

Those meds are *such* cut-ups.

(*In Milltown, Wis.*)

Chas. Ekstrom, Blacksmith.
I am now open for business. (MISS V. L.)

What! Did he go to Rochester, *too?*

(*Chicago Tribune*)

It will be a four-story fireproof structure on a lot fronting 176 feet on the road and 150 feet on the boulevard. It will have on the first floor eleven one-room bachelor apartments, with baths and disappearing beds, large lobby, and ladies' waiting-room.

If the weather is inclement, the ladies will be furnished with umbrellas.

(*Chicago Daily News*)

WANTED—Man to sleep in undertaker's place; will make it interesting for the right party.

Will probably present him with a stiff hat.

(*Owenton, Ky., News-Herald*)

Several from here attended a series of meetings at Cedar. Rev. Walker Shearer of Stamping Ground is conducting the meeting.

Working close to his flock.

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(Llano, Tex., Searchlight)

Mrs. Ache and Mrs. Boiles were the guests of Mrs. Hiram Casner last Wednesday.

And a pleasant time was had by all.

(Chicago Tribune)

SITUATION WANTED—Married couple, cook, housework or laundress; no work for man.

Now you're talking!

(Astoria, Ill., Argus-Searchlight)

In giving the account of the Weber-Block wedding last week, it was omitted that refreshments of ice-cream, cake and bananas were served following the ceremony.

Yes, but what *I* want to know is, who peeled the bell?

(Ad of New York City furniture dealer)

"We Stand Behind Every Bed We Sell."

Well, I'm glad *I* don't talk in my sleep.

(Minneapolis Journal)

"If the feet begin to itch and burn when you enter a warm room, after long exposure to the cold, you may feel reasonably sure that children will result if you do not begin treatment at once to prevent them."

Here's where *I* keep out of warm rooms, I'll tell you *that!*

(Butte Miner)

"Woman wants cleaning four days each week, different places. Address R 86, care Miner."

Boy, let me look at your ears; both ubbem.

(San Antonio Express)

"Capt. White was stung by a bumble bee in the retreat."

Ouch!

(Report of Missouri State Fair)

"A young lady was stung by a wasp in the amphitheater."

Wow! I bet it hurt.

(Report of railroad gang foreman)

"The horse No. 8 killed is a mule, and is not dead yet."

Well, we'll fix him for sure on the return trip.

(Ad of a maternity house in Dunellen, N. J.)

"No men patients admitted."

Whew, that's a relief!

(Stevens Point, Wis., Journal)

LOST—A pair of trousers, somewhere between the post-office and 401 Michigan Avenue. Reward for return to Kuhl Bros.

How kuhl the weather seems to be growing lately!

(From Connelly's story "Mother Machree")

" 'Twas the long, long wait before I heard his father's step on the lintel."

Coming home on his *ear,* as usual?

(Ad of a music house)

"This new, genuine machine in your home with 10 d. f. records."

That's the kind they usually throw in for nothing.

(Green Bay, Wis., Press-Gazette)

Boyakin served with the infantry in France and was wounded by a bayonet in the Argonne.

Watson, isn't that usually a fatal spot?

(Detroit Free Press)

Room with two meals daily in one of the prettiest private homes in city for one permanent gentleman with every convenience imaginable.

Aw, there ain't no such animal, and never was.

(Mason County Enterprise)

Items Taken From Enterprise Files 25 Years Ago.

The only people who were badly frozen in Mason County during the severity of the atmosphere last Sunday night were an aged couple at Sugar Grove. They were frozen together in bed, the husband's whiskers being entangled in the wife's hair and the moisture of his breathing forming ice two inches thick, which bound them even more firmly than a parson's knot, and they had to goose fashion around until they got the shears and to the stove before they could cut and thaw themselves loose. This story is vouched for by a neighbor who told it to us Monday morning while the mercury yet stood at 24 degrees below zero. (MISS C. M. I.)

Boy, tell the janitor to turn on a little more steam.

(Marble Rock Locals)

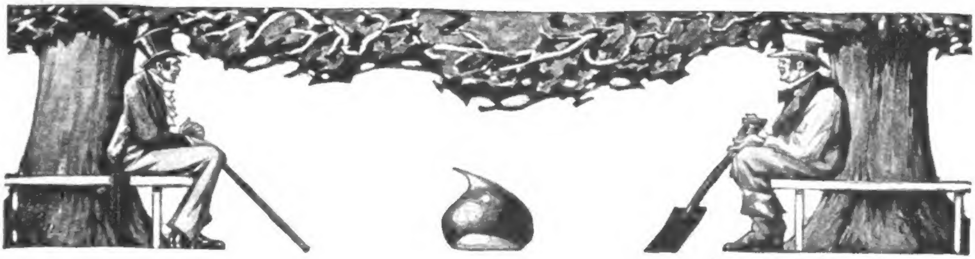
FREDERICKSBURG, IA.—C. E. Russell is going on crutches as a result of striking his ankle with a pick while trying to remove some dirt. (MISS M. E. S.)

"Saturday night" in Ioway.

(Dubuque Times-Journal)

Mr. and Mrs. Anton Heller are the parents of a baby boy, their first born since last week.

Did you say "Hellers"?



Everybody's Chestnut Tree

Editor's Note: Though the sign is the Chestnut Tree, no story is barred by its youth. We will gladly pay for available ones. Address all manuscripts to "The Chestnut Tree," enclosing stamped addressed envelope.

"I WONDER what has become of the old-fashioned dime novel?"

"It has gone to a dollar and a half," replied the grouch.

A WEALTHY girl from America was attending a social function at a country house in England.

"You American girls have not such healthy complexions as we have," said an English duchess to the girl. "I always wonder why our noblemen take such a fancy to your white faces."

"It isn't our white faces that attract them," responded the American girl; "it's our greenbacks."

A TRAVELER passing through a colored settlement heard cries of anguish, and came upon a black woman who was belaboring a pickaninny.

"Wait!" said the stranger. "What's the boy been doing?"

"He's done a plenty," answered the woman, with upraised hand. "He tuck an' lef' de chicken-coop do' open, an' all de chickens done run away."

"Don't worry," said the stranger. "You know how chickens are. They'll all come back tonight."

"Come back!" Her voice rose to a shriek. "Huh! They'll *go* back."

DR. JINKS: I suppose you must have lost some of your patients by being in Europe for so many months.

DR. KENT: Yes, confound it! Ten or a dozen of them got well.

LITTLE Joan had just been told the story of Daniel in the lions' den. Then mother asked:

"And what do you think Daniel did the very first thing after he was saved from the lions?"

Without hesitation Joan replied: "Why, he must have telephoned home to his wife to tell her he was all right."

MRS. ROY'S colored cook, who went home every night the moment she had washed the dinner dishes, often forgot to come back in time to prepare breakfast the next morning.

"Sara," said Mrs. Roy one day, "every time you fail to come and get breakfast I shall take off a quarter from your wages."

Sara silently consented, and the next few mornings she came in early. Then one morning she did not appear until ten o'clock.

"Look here, Sara," complained Mrs. Roy. "I had to fix breakfast again this morning."

"Well," returned Sara indignantly, "ain't ah payin' you foh it?"

THE host at the drawing-room concert was nervous and inexperienced and at the end of a song with which one of the guests had "obliged" he rose hurriedly.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he began, "before Mrs. Smith started to sing she—ah—told me her—ah—voice was not in the best condition, and—ah—asked me to apologize for it, but I neglected to do so and—ah—I apologize now."

A BRIGHT little girl, aged four, and her brother, aged six, were spending the night with their aunt. When bedtime came the aunt asked them how they said their prayers. The little girl answered: "Sometimes I say them on muddy's knees and sometimes to the side of the bed."

"And how about you, little boy?" asked the aunt.

"Oh, I don't need to pray. I sleep with daddy."

"SAY, Sam, is dat so what I hears 'bout Brother Zeke bein' dead?"

"Sho' is."

"Now ain't dat bad! When is de internment, Sam?"

"Dey ain't goin' to intern 'im."

"What dey goin' to do wid 'im, den?"

"Dey goin' to incriminate 'im."

"REGINALD," said the Sunday-school teacher, during a lesson on the baptismal covenant, "can you tell me the two things necessary to baptism?"

"Yes, ma'am," said Reginald. "Water and a baby."

"DINAH," said the mistress, "I hear you are married."

"Yassum, I's got a good man now."

"Does he provide for you all right?"

"Yas, he a good provider, but I's skeered he going to be cotched at it."

A SCOT went to a lawyer, laid before him a question and asked whether he would undertake the case.

"Certainly," said the latter, "I will readily undertake the case. We are sure to win."

"So ye really think it's a good case?"

"Most decidedly, my dear sir. I am prepared to guarantee that you will secure a favorable verdict."

"Ah, weel, I'm much obleeged to ye, but I dinna think I'll go tae law this time, for, ye see, the case I've just laid before ye is my opponent's."

JUST before the wedding ceremony Pat came down very much disheveled. When asked what had happened he said:

"I met a man upstairs and when I asked him who he was he said, 'I'm the best man.' And begorry, he was!"

"WHERE are you men going?" the new boss demanded of two darkies who were shuffling along as if bent on nothing in particular.

"Boss," said one, "we is gwine up to de mill with dis heah plank."

"Plank! I don't see any plank!" roared the supervisor.

Not at all disturbed by his tone, the speaker looked down at his hands, then over his shoulder. Finally, to his fellow worker he calmly observed:

"Well, now, don't dat beat all! Ef we ain't gone an' clean forgit de plank!"

A FRIEND inquired of Sandy, who had recently married, how he and his wife were getting along.

"We mon get along fine week days," replied Sandy. "But when it comes Sabbath, we walk doon to the corner together and she gaes aff to yon Methodist body, while I gang to the House o' God."

"I DON'T see that sausage I ordered," said the housewife to the butcher's boy who had just delivered her order.

"Oh, that's all right, mum," said the youngster. "The boss told me to tell you that the wurst was yet to come."

UNCLE HENRY had taken his little nephew Willie to a seaside resort, and during one of their strolls on the beach had told the youngster that if he could find two pebbles exactly alike he would be given a dollar.

Eagerly Willie began the search. In an hour he came to his uncle and said:

"Well, uncle, I have found one of them!"

GIRL: I can't agree with you on the subject of petting.

GUY: How I wish we could get together on that subject!

SCHOOL MA'AM: Why was Solomon the wisest man?

PUPIL: Because he had so many wives to advise him.

SCHOOL MA'AM: Well, I declare! That is not exactly the reason given in the book, but I award you, Johnny, our weekly prize for brilliant scholarship, and here is a nice large doughnut that will go well with your luncheon.